

UNIT 1 Describing People

- 1 Look at the people in the photographs and talk about each in terms of appearance, personality and life/lifestyle.

Appearance: How would you describe each person's appearance?
Which features of their appearance are most noticeable?
What does their way of sitting, looking, etc. suggest?

Personality: What do you imagine each person is like?

Life & Lifestyle: What else do you imagine about each person concerning such things as profession, ambitions, interests/hobbies, daily routine, etc?

A composition describing a person should consist of:

- a) an **introduction** giving brief information about who the person is, where/how you met him/her, how you heard about him/her, etc;
 - b) a **main body** which may include description of such things as physical appearance, personality/behaviour, manner/mannerisms and/or details of the person's life and lifestyle, (hobbies, interests, everyday activities, etc.) and
 - c) a **conclusion** in which you comment on why the person is of interest, express your feelings/opinion concerning the person, etc.
- In a descriptive composition of a person, you may also be asked to *explain* why this person is successful/admirable/unusual, etc, why he/she made such a strong impression on you, how he/she has influenced you, etc.
 - Each paragraph should start with a topic sentence which summarises the paragraph. The content of the paragraph depends on the topic itself and where the emphasis is placed.
 - Descriptions of people may be included in several other types of writing tasks such as narratives, letters, assessment reports, etc.

Points to Consider

- To describe **physical appearance**, you should give details of the person's **height/build, age, facial features, hair, clothing**, etc. moving from the most general aspects to the most specific details. *e.g. Bill, who is in his early twenties, is quite tall and well-built, with thick black hair and piercing blue eyes. He is usually dressed in jeans and a T-shirt.*
- To describe **personality and behaviour**, you can support your description with examples of manner and mannerism: *e.g. Mark is rather unsociable, usually sitting silently in a corner observing others from a distance.*
- To describe **life, lifestyle and beliefs**, you should talk about the person's habits, interests, profession, daily routine, opinions, etc.
e.g. Being both a university student and a part-time assistant in a supermarket, Janet has little free time to go out in the evenings.
- If the instructions for the writing task ask you to describe someone related to the present, *e.g. "Describe a person who is unusual ..."*, you will describe the person using Present tenses. If you are asked to describe sb related to the past, sb who is no longer alive, or sb whom you met some time ago ... *e.g. "Describe a famous person you met who was not as you expected ..."*, you will describe the person using Past tenses.
- The use of descriptive vocabulary, *e.g. stunning, slender, etc.* and a variety of linking words and structures will make your writing more interesting.



Introduction

Paragraph 1

*who the person is/
when/how you first met/
saw him/her*

Main Body

Paragraph 2

physical appearance

Paragraph 3

*personality/behaviour (with
justification/examples)*

Paragraph 4

life/lifestyle/beliefs

Paragraph 5

explanation 1 + justification

Paragraph 6

explanation 2 + justification

Conclusion

Final Paragraph

*comments/feelings about
person*

- 2 Read the following composition and fill in the missing information in the plan. Look at the highlighted adjective-noun combinations, then close your books and try to remember as many of these as possible. What other words can you think of which could be used to describe a person's physical appearance?

Describe a person you know well

When I began working at Hillcrest Nursery School three years ago, I was introduced to Sharon Dunn, the school's headmistress.

Her **smart appearance** and **warm, friendly expression** made me like her immediately. She is a **small-boned, smiling woman** in her early fifties, with **twinkling blue eyes** and **soft, silver curls**. Although she dresses simply she always manages to look elegant.

She is a very **fair-minded person** who treats everyone at the school with equal respect. Despite clasping her hands nervously when she is upset, she is actually very calm, which is shown by her ability to keep her temper in the most difficult situations. Her quiet voice and **gentle, caring manner** make her popular with the children.

Ms Dunn has no children of her own; however, she says that she feels like a mother to all of the children in her school. In fact, she has no time for family life, since she dedicates her life to her job. Besides taking care of various administrative tasks every day, she always takes time to talk to the teachers and parents. In addition, she often holds meetings with the school's Board of Directors, as well as with staff and parents.

To my mind, Sharon Dunn is a dedicated professional who is a wonderful role model, not only for the children but for the teachers, as well.

Introduction

first met Ms Dunn at Hillcrest Nursery School, headmistress

Main Body

• Appearance

smart; warm, friendly expression

• Personality/Behaviour

• Life/Lifestyle/Beliefs

Conclusion

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

- A description of a person's appearance could include such aspects as **height/build, age, facial features/expression, hair, clothes, etc.** You may describe **visual details** (e.g. *A tall, heavily-built man wearing a black leather jacket ...*) and/or use words and phrases which describe the **general impression** created by the person's appearance (e.g. *Donna's slender, youthful build makes her look younger than she is, while her face, with its bright smile and friendly expression, is very attractive*).

Note that when you describe someone for official purposes e.g. *a police report*, you emphasise the person's physical appearance, giving the most accurate description possible.

sparkling/watery/piercing eyes
sarcastic/condescending/friendly smile
scars/freckles/wrinkles



C

- 3 Look at the photographs, choose the most appropriate descriptive words from those suggested, and then write a short description of each person, as in the example.



broad/hooded/button nose
fair/smooth/swarthy skin
bloodshot/sunken/protruding eyes

He has a hooked nose, swarthy skin and bloodshot eyes.



portly/slender/powerful build
tanned/clean-shaven/fine-featured face
flabby/bulging/withered biceps



flowing/silver/curly hair
warm/hostile/arrogant expression
dimples/pimples/wrinkles

Linking Words and Structures

- Writing which contains a series of short sentences or the same simple linking words (such as "and") soon becomes boring and repetitive. To avoid this, you should use a wide range of linking words and structures.

with

*She is tall and striking, **with** long blonde hair.*

Relative Clauses who/which/whose

*My neighbour, **who** is slightly eccentric, has dozens of filthy cats.*

*He is a scruffy child **whose** clothes are torn and dirty.*

*He has a broken nose, **which** makes him look like a boxer.*

Result so/such (a) ... (that)

*She is **so** beautiful **(that)** she looks like a film star.*

Addition in addition to, as well as/besides, moreover, furthermore, not only ... but also ..., etc.

*He is very tall, **in addition to** being very thin.*

*My grandmother has deep wrinkles, **as well as** thin grey hair.*

*He is **not only** artistic, **but also** a successful businessman.*

Contrast but/yet/However/Nonetheless/Even so + clause

Although/(Even) though/While + clause

In spite of/Despite + -ing form/noun/the fact that

*He is temperamental, **but/yet** he is a loyal friend.*

*He looks as though he's an old man. **However**, he is only 35.*

***Although** he has a huge, powerful body, he's a very gentle person.*

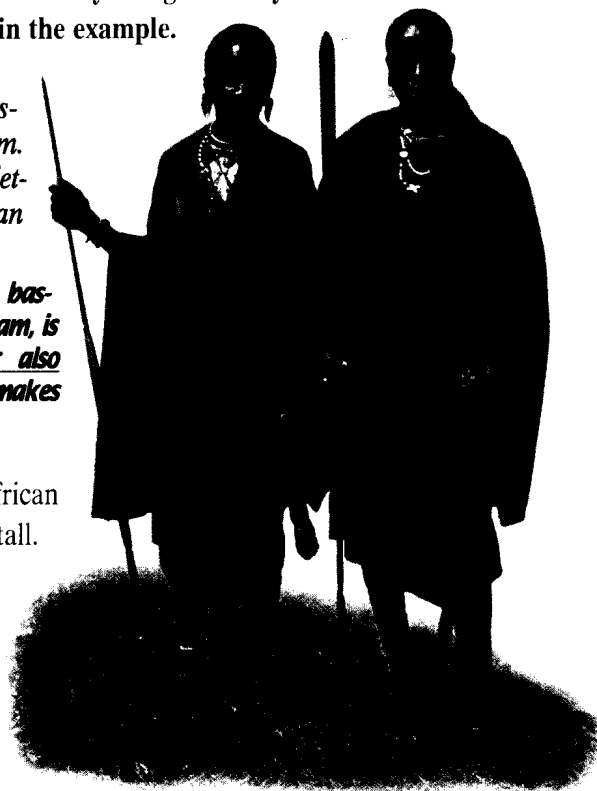
***In spite of** being very busy, she always has time for her children.*

- 4 Join the following sentences by using a variety of the structures shown in the table above, as in the example.

e.g. Kevin Boyce plays basketball for our school team. He is very tall. He is athletic, too. This makes him an excellent player.

*Kevin Boyce, **who** plays basketball for our school team, is **not only** very tall **but also** very athletic, **which** makes him an excellent player.*

- 1 The Masai are East African tribespeople. They are tall. They have noble features. They look extremely graceful.



- Grace Kelly reached Hollywood stardom in the 1950s. She was famous for her delicate features. She married a prince too
- The postman is 56. He has thick black hair. It has only a few touches of grey. He has smooth skin. This makes him look younger than he is.
- Mrs Russell is tiny. Her flat is next to mine. She has white hair and wrinkles. She looks 90 years old.
- Maurice has black hair. He has a thick black moustache. He has a dark complexion.
- The policeman's muscular build filled his large uniform. He had a high, broad forehead and a strong, square jaw. These gave him an air of authority.

PERSONALITY AND BEHAVIOUR

- In descriptions of people we can include a clear description of a person's personality and behaviour with a variety of **character words**.

e.g. *He is **friendly** and **honest**.*

*She speaks very **rudely**.*

*He is **greedy** and a **miser**.*

These words should be **justified** in an explanation or example. e.g. *Brian, who is very **sociable**, **enjoys** going to parties and meeting people.*

- If you describe negative qualities, you should use mild language. Use: **tend to**, **seem to**, **is rather**, **can sometimes be**, etc. e.g. *Sarah is an excellent worker, **but she can sometimes be rather impatient**. (not: ~~She is impatient~~.)*
- You may describe personality and behaviour with examples of **manner** and **mannerisms** (the gestures people use, the way they speak/walk, etc) e.g. *Timothy is a very **tolerant** father; **no matter what his children do he doesn't lose his temper**.*

Note that personality characteristics should be stressed in certain types of writing, for example when you recommend someone for a job.

Linking Words and Structures

● LINKING CAUSE AND EFFECT

She is open and friendly. (Cause)

She is popular. (Effect)

because/as/since

owing to/due to (+ -ing/noun/the fact that) ...

As a result/consequence of

A/the result of ... is...

... ; as a result, ...

She is popular because she is open and friendly.

She is popular due to being/due to the fact that she is open and friendly.

A result of her being open is that she is popular..

... , so ...

therefore/for this reason ...

The reason (that/why) ... is...

She is open and friendly, so she is popular.

She is open and friendly, therefore she is popular.

The reason she is popular is that she is open and friendly.

- 5** All the sentences below use the simple linking word "because". Look at the table above, then rewrite each of the sentences using the linking word or phrase in bold type.

e.g. People often find him offensive because he says exactly what he thinks.

A result of ...

A result of his saying exactly what he thinks is that people often find him offensive.

- 1 People trust Paul because he is so honest. Since ...
- 2 He is very successful because he works extremely hard. The reason ...
- 3 Joan is an interesting person because she has lived in exotic places and has had so many strange experiences. ... ; as a result, ...
- 4 Don comes across as being inquisitive because he tends to ask people a lot of questions. ... , so ...
- 5 I dislike her because she is vain and self-centred. ... due to ...

Impressions, Opinions and Reactions

I think/feel/etc (that)

It seems to me that

To me/To my mind

As far as I'm concerned

In my opinion/view/eyes

sb seems/appears **to be** ...

sb strikes people/comes across **as** (being) ...

sb gives the impression **of being** .../the impression that ...

I/people/etc find/consider sb **to be** ...

I think of/see/regard sb **as being** ...

- 6** Using the expressions in brackets, write a complete sentence from each of the following 'skeleton' sentences, as in the example.

e.g. Graham / sometimes / be insincere / result / try / flatter / everyone (come across)
Graham sometimes comes across as being insincere, as a result of trying to flatter everyone.

- 1 He has / habit / speak with / mouth full / which I / be / disgusting (find)
- 2 Sarah / people / be / immature / since / often giggle / when someone / speak / her (strike)
- 3 Owing / fact / David / never pay / anything, he / be / mean (impression)
- 4 As / he / not return things / he borrow / he / be / dishonest (opinion)
- 5 Since my sister often forget / where she put / things, she / be / absent-minded (appear)

Compound Adjectives

Compound adjectives are formed with:

- a) **present participles**: a quick-acting officer, a hard-working doctor
- b) **past participles**: a stylishly-dressed woman, an open-hearted young man, a narrow-minded politician, a widely-known football player
- c) **cardinal numbers + nouns**: a three-year-old boy, a six-foot tall man
- d) **well, badly, ill, poorly + past participle**: a well-intentioned friend, an ill-mannered actress

- 7** Make compound adjectives to describe the following:

- 1 A baby who is crying constantly.
- 2 A speaker who has prepared thoroughly.
- 3 Students who are organised well.
- 4 A girl who has curly hair.
- 5 A boy who has brown eyes.
- 6 A basketball player who is 42 years old.
- 7 An artist who is dressed in funny clothes.
- 8 A child-minder who has been specially trained.
- 9 A man who has a short temper.
- 10 A man with one leg.
- 11 A dentist who has gentle manners.

Participles

In formal writing, present and past participles can be used to replace clauses as in the following examples.

She is so rich that she can buy anything she wants.

Being so rich, she can buy anything she wants.

She was so rich that she could buy anything she wanted.

Having been so rich, she could buy anything she wanted.

When he is seen from a distance, he resembles Paul Newman.

Seen from a distance, he resembles Paul Newman.

Monica, who was dressed entirely in red, entered the room.

Dressed entirely in red, Monica entered the room.

8 Rewrite the following sentences using participles.

- 1 Oliver, who was covered in dust, climbed down the ladder.
- 2 Veronica, who was tired out, could not go on with the journey.
- 3 Richard is so rude that he has no friends.
- 4 She is so intelligent that she can speak six languages.
- 5 Frank is so absent-minded that he always forgets his car keys.
- 6 Susan, who was laughing hysterically, couldn't speak.
- 7 Paul, who was walking on crutches, left the room slowly.
- 8 Louise is so patient that she is cut out to be a teacher.

- 9 The following text describes twin brothers. Read it, circle the words or phrases describing personality and behaviour, and underline the justifications or examples given.

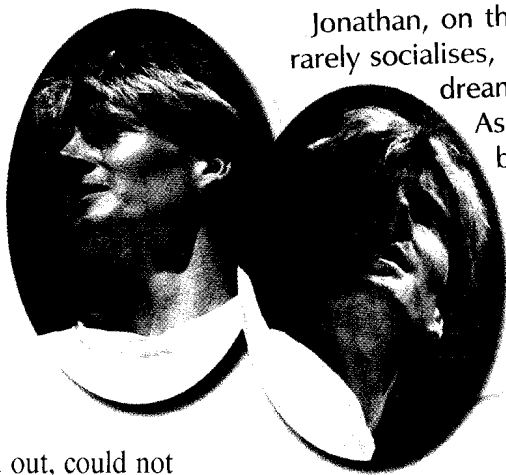
Describe two people who are very different, despite their apparent similarity

Jason and Jonathan are identical twin brothers, who are in the same year at school as I am. Physically, they are indistinguishable; they are like "two peas in a pod", as the saying goes. They have the same short blond hair and fine features, and they tend to dress in the same casual style. When you get to know them, however, it soon becomes clear that their personalities are completely different.

Jason is very outgoing, assertive and ambitious — the sort of person who might run a large corporation. An example of this is the fact that he is already the president of the school debating society. Although people tend to find him rather pompous and conceited, to me he simply seems full of confidence. For instance, he is much more likely to say "I can do it" than "I'm the best". It is true that he comes across as stubborn, though, due to his habit of refusing to admit he is wrong in any disagreement.

Jonathan, on the other hand, is more of an introvert. He very rarely socialises, preferring to spend his time on his own. He is a dreamer who can spend hours staring at the clouds.

As a result, he sometimes gives the impression of being lazy, while a few people even regard him as slow-witted. On better acquaintance, however, he turns out to be not only enthusiastic and energetic, but also deeply caring which is shown by his tireless work on behalf of various charities.



- 10 Use the adjectives listed below to complete the following sentences describing character as in the example:

childish, cruel, dishonest, friendly, lazy, mean, moody, rude, shy, stubborn, tactless


Then choose from the list below the adjective which has a meaning almost the same as the word you have just used. Write each adjective next to its synonym.

blunt, deceitful, idle, immature, insolent, miserly, obstinate, timid, sociable, spiteful, temperamental

e.g. Maria is a **friendly/sociable** girl who loves meeting people and gets on well with everyone.

- 1 A good example of Roger's behaviour was the time that he refused to finish a game of chess because he was losing.

- 2 Andrew is so that he does nothing all day except sit and watch television.
- 3 Sandra is a rather girl who enjoys upsetting people and getting them into trouble.
- 4 Gerald tends to be a(n) person; it's difficult to believe what he says or to trust him.
- 5 Speaking to strangers is terrifying for Elaine because she is so
- 6 Melissa tends to be and often upsets people by saying what she thinks without considering their feelings.
- 7 My brother is very ; he can suddenly change from being perfectly charming to angry or miserable.
- 8 Mr Purvis is a rather old man who refuses to change his mind once he has reached a decision about something.
- 9 The way that he shouts at his teachers is just one example of his behaviour.
- 10 I think Carol is because she only spends money when she absolutely has to.

- 11  Read the table, then listen to the cassette and complete the missing information. Using the information in the table and the linking words in the list, compare Anthony and June.

Similarities: also, too, as well as

Differences: however, on the other hand, whereas, while, but, although

e.g. *In some ways, Anthony and June are very similar.*

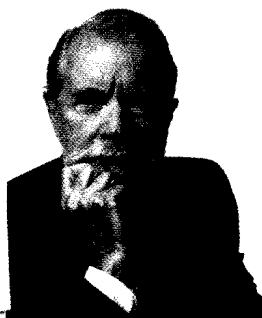
For example, they are both fashionable ... However, ...

	BOTH	ANTHONY	JUNE
Appearance:	<i>fashionable</i> , <i>conservative</i>
Personality	<i>self-confident,</i> ,	<i>not outgoing,</i>
& Behaviour:	<i>sensitive</i>	<i>enjoys</i> <i>easily</i>	<i>seems</i>

Manner and Mannerisms

- 12 Complete each of the following sentences with the set of character words which best matches the manner/mannerisms described.

- a arrogant, smug and condescending
b sensitive, generous and caring
c energetic, outgoing and confident
d distant, absent-minded and impolite



- 1 William comes across as because he holds his head up high, speaks in a loud, clear voice and looks at people with a steady gaze.
- 2 Most people regard him as , on account of his sarcastic tone of voice and sneering expression.
- 3 The reason Lydia seems is that she often looks away in the middle of a conversation and sometimes doesn't answer when she is spoken to.
- 4 Phillip strikes me as since he always realises when someone is upset or worried and offers them comfort, advice and practical help.

- 13 Read the following descriptions and fill in each blank with a "character" word from the list below. Then rewrite each description in one sentence as in the example. Use as many different linking techniques as possible.

aggressive, impatient, insincere, nervous, timid, vain

e.g. *Kevin bites his nails. He jumps at loud noises. He is **nervous**.*

As well as biting his nails, Kevin, who is a very nervous person, jumps at loud noises.

- 1 Cathy spends hours doing her make-up. She is always looking at herself in the mirror. She is
- 2 Jerry blushes easily. He looks at the floor when he is talking to people. He's very
- 3 Gordon shouts at people a lot. He also clenches his fists whenever he gets angry. He is
- 4 Paula flatters people she dislikes. She pretends to agree with them, even if she's of a different opinion. She's
- 5 Roberta taps her foot if she has to wait. She sighs if things don't happen quickly. She's

LIFE, LIFESTYLE AND BELIEFS

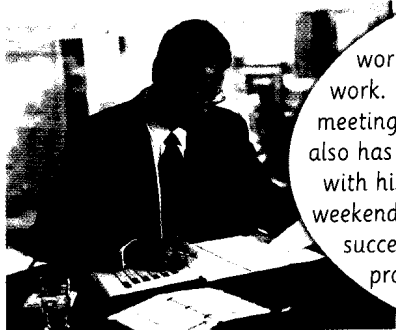
- In a description of a person you could include information that relates to their life, lifestyle and beliefs. You may refer to factual details such as **profession, qualifications, family, etc e.g. He is an eminent scientist who is famous for his research in genetics.** or aspects such as **daily routine, hobbies, interests, achievements, beliefs, ambitions, future prospects, etc. e.g. George is working hard because he wants to be promoted.**
- Information about life, lifestyle and beliefs gives the reader a clearer idea of what the person is and does, and often also suggests what the person's character is like.
e.g. Andrew's ambition is to climb Mt Everest = athletic, adventurous

14 Read the descriptions of three people's lifestyles and beliefs and try to guess what each person does. Which aspects of their life, lifestyle and beliefs do they mention? Now write a similar paragraph about a teacher or a reporter.

Ann has a very unpredictable lifestyle because she doesn't have a regular job. When she has a part, however, she tends to get up late as she works until late in the evenings. Then, she goes to the gym because it's important for her to be healthy. After that Ann learns her lines or attends extra rehearsals. She goes to work at about six o'clock. Ann's profession enables her to fulfil one of her dreams — to travel. She tries to keep an optimistic approach to life as you never know what the future holds.



Steve has a very busy lifestyle — getting up at five thirty, working out in the gym and then going straight to work. He often has working breakfasts and lunches and meetings to attend that go on until the early hours. Steve also has to travel a lot, so he isn't able to spend much time with his family and friends, although he tries to keep his weekends free. He believes in hard work and that the key to success lies in honesty and determination. His recent promotion gives him reason to hope that he will be a senior partner of the firm one day.



Claire's life is pretty much the same from day to day. On weekdays she gets up at seven, wakes up her teenaged sons and sees them off to school. Then she starts the housework, shopping and so on. She spends a lot of time working in the garden, which she really enjoys. Claire always tries to arrange something special for the weekends — a drive in the country with the whole family, for instance. She believes that taking care of her family is a job in itself and one that she takes great pride in.



15 Read the short extract below, and say which aspects of the person's life a lifestyle the paragraph deals with.

Moir's career as a respected painter keeps her busy from dawn to dusk. Fortunately she loves meeting new people, so she can combine her interests with her career. When she is not attending exhibitions and gallery openings she leads a very disciplined life. She paints from 6 o'clock in the morning until 4 o'clock in the afternoon. She usually spends the early evenings with her husband and two children. Her ambition is to have a one-woman-show in an important London gallery — and her dream is to own an art gallery one day.

16 You will hear two people talking about a successful writer. Read the table, then listen to the cassette and fill in the missing information. Use the notes, first say then write description of Emma's life a lifestyle similar to the one in Ex. 15

CAREER
successful writer

INTERESTS

DAILY ROUTINE
writes from am to pm

FAMILY

AMBITIONS
start school for

- 17** Read the model below and give the topic of each paragraph. Then, list which aspects of description have been included, and underline the justifications/examples given.

Describe a person you regard as eccentric

Chris Martin moved into the house next door to mine two years ago. Even before he came round to introduce himself the following day, I could tell that he was truly eccentric.

Perhaps the most striking thing about Chris is his appearance. His slender body is usually adorned in some kind of tight-fitting, multi-coloured catsuit which makes him look like a comic book super hero. He generally tops this off with one of his flowing capes and a mask. His hair is as crazy as his clothes, going from yellow at the front, to red, to blue to green at the back, and it sticks up as if he's styled it with the aid of a powerful electric current. He has some rather strange mannerisms, too, such as his tendency to bow when introducing himself for the first time.

In spite of his strange appearance, Chris is a truly decent person and the world would be a better place if there were more people like him. He is very polite, friendly and is genuinely caring, always remembering birthdays with a photograph of a bouquet of flowers and bringing me chicken soup or Japanese tea if I'm ill. Chris will help if he possibly can and is ready to listen to everyone's problems. He tends to be aggressive from time to time, but this is because people make fun of him.

Although Chris could never be described as ordinary, I enjoy having him as a neighbour. Life is never boring when you have someone like him living next door, and his combination of unpredictability and genuine kindness make him a valuable friend.



Writing techniques

Certain writing techniques (use of weather description, direct speech or dramatic language to create mystery/suspense, reference to feelings/moods, etc.) can be used when describing people in order to make your description more vivid and interesting. See how an ordinary beginning can be made more exciting:

Instead of writing: *I first met my future wife, Heidi, in a café where I was doing my crossword on a warm afternoon in July.*

You could write: *I watched with a mixture of irritation and apprehension as the busker approached my table where I was doing the crossword on that balmy July afternoon. I felt irritated because I hate being disturbed when I'm enjoying my own company and apprehensive because I never know how to tell people politely to go away. To my surprise, however, the woman sat down opposite me and put her guitar down on the floor. "Can I play something for you?" she said with a cheeky grin. Little did I know right then that this woman, Heidi Tierney, was to be my future wife.*

- 18** You will hear Stella telling her friend about a person she dislikes. Read the questions, then listen to the tape and answer them. You may keep notes while listening. Looking at your notes, describe the person.

1 Who is Stella describing?

.....

2 What do Stella and her friend say about his appearance?

.....

3 What does she say about his personality and/or behaviour?

.....

4 What *two* reasons does she give for disliking him?

.....

- 19** Read the following sentences and rewrite them using writing techniques.

- I first met Marion Browne, the famous writer, at a party where I hardly knew anyone.
- The man who was to become the greatest influence in my life, William Morrison, was introduced to me by my boss.
- The oddest person I have ever known was Jack Simpson.

20 Read the model below and compare it with the composition in exercise 17. Which writing techniques have been used?

It was late on a cold January night two years ago when I first laid eyes on Chris Martin, after hearing a removal van in front of the vacant house next door. Curious to see who my new neighbour was going to be, I peered out from between the curtains. Under the street lamp there appeared to be a multi-coloured clown-like figure gesticulating wildly and shouting, "Be careful with that box! That's a ten-thousand-pound amp you've got there!"

When Chris came round to introduce himself the following day, I was rather taken aback to discover that his curious guise the previous night had not been a trick of the light, but that it was, in fact his "normal" appearance. His slender body was adorned in a comic book, super hero catsuit, cape and mask and his rainbow hair looked as if it had been styled with the aid of an electric socket and a wet finger. He introduced himself with a low bow then took my hand and gently kissed it before murmuring in a deep, husky voice, "Chris Martin, at your service, Madam."

In the months that followed, I soon realised that Chris was one of the politest, friendliest and most genuinely caring people I've ever met — although he has a strange way of showing this. For instance, on my birthday, he rang my doorbell, greeted me with a bow when I opened the door, said "This is for you," and handed me a photograph of a bouquet of flowers. He brings me chicken soup and Japanese tea when I'm ill, and I know he's always ready to listen to my problems and cheer me up. Once, when I was feeling a bit low, he said, "I know! Let's go to the zoo — there's nothing like a nice elephant to make you feel better!"

Although Chris could never be described as ordinary, I enjoy having him as a neighbour. Just the other day he came round unexpectedly with an entire Thai meal beautifully laid out on a tray. When I thanked him, he merely shrugged and said, "What else are neighbours for?" It's this sort of thing that makes him such a valuable and unpredictable friend.

INTERPRETING THE TOPIC

- Various composition tasks in examinations ask you to describe a person or people; however, this description may be only one part of the composition. Composition tasks often ask you to **describe** a person **and explain** something about them.

In order to complete such a composition task successfully, you should not describe every aspect of appearance, personality, etc. You should choose the aspects which are most relevant to the particular question.

e.g. "Describe a person who has done a great deal for others, and explain how he or she has managed to achieve so much."

In answering this question, it is not as relevant to describe appearance

e.g. "He is a tall, well-built man with pale blue eyes ..."

as it is to describe the person's character, achievements and so on. *e.g.*

"She is strong-willed, outgoing, and dedicated to ..."

- It is important to **interpret the instructions** carefully. The instructions contain certain **key words** and phrases which you must not ignore; for instance, if the instructions say "Describe a famous person ..." you cannot describe someone who is unknown to the general public.
- The instructions may also ask you to **explain** the reasons for your impressions/reactions, for somebody's success, etc. *e.g. Describe a person who has influenced you greatly and explain the reasons for this influence.* You should state each reason in a separate paragraph with a clear **topic sentence** which summarises the main idea of each paragraph, and supports this with **examples** and/or **justification**.

e.g. The main reason I found him eccentric was the way he dressed.

[Topic sentence]

For instance, he often wore strange, enormous hats that seemed to belong to some other period in history. Furthermore, ...

[Examples/Justification]

21 Read the following composition task and underline the key words. What information will you include in each paragraph? How would you adapt the paragraph plan to organise your composition?

- Describe a person whom you associate with a particular place and explain why you make this connection.
- Describe a famous person from history whom you admire. Give reasons for your choice.
- Describe a person you know well and say how he/she has changed since you first met him/her.
- Describe two people you know well and say how their hobbies reveal their different personalities.
- Describe someone you knew in the past and say in what ways you were influenced by him/her.

- 22** Read the model below, underline the topic sentences of each paragraph, and then complete the outline plan on the right.

Describe a person you admire and explain why you admire him or her.



- * Introduction - Gary - fellow student
- * Main Body

DESCRIBE

physical appearance

.....

Personality/Behaviour/Interests

.....

Life/lifestyles/beliefs

.....

EXPLAIN/REASON

"Why":

.....

"Why":

.....

- * Conclusion

.....

The person I admire most is not famous at all, yet to my mind his achievements are as important as those of any historical figure. Gary Young is a fellow student of mine at college, and for him this fact itself is a major achievement.

Gary suffers from cerebral palsy, which makes it almost impossible for him to control his movements. As a result, he spends his life in a wheelchair, cannot write with a pen or pencil, and speaks so slowly and strangely that it takes patience to understand what he is saying. This, together with his thin, twisted body and awkward facial expressions, can often cause people to treat him as if he were a backward child.

However, behind his physical appearance, Gary is a warm, fun-loving, intelligent person. His disability affects his muscles, not his mind or personality. He enjoys the same things any student does — listening to music, meeting friends, and so on — and he is not only the best student in our class, but also has a wonderful sense of humour and genuine interest in other people. Unable to express himself easily in conversation, he uses a special typewriter to write letters to his friends, and beautiful poems which show the true depth of his thoughts and character. He lives a very regular life, studying every day and never allowing himself to fall behind in his schoolwork. Of course he enjoys going out as well, and he believes that a balance of work and play make life happy and fulfilling.

The main reason I admire him so much is that he is determined to lead a normal life, in spite of the physical difficulties he has to overcome. Although his condition prevented him from going to school, he gave himself an education by studying at home. He lives alone, cooking and cleaning with the help of equipment he designed himself, and he leads a full social life with his many friends, including visits to the theatre, or even (on one memorable occasion when I was with him) to the funfair.

Another reason I admire Gary, is the fact that he never feels sorry for himself. He says, for instance, that being unable to move around simply gives him more time to think. In fact, he always manages to see the bright side of any situation, so that, far from needing his friends to comfort him, he actually cheers us up when we are worried or depressed!

I would admire Gary as a person even if he didn't have any disability; the fact that he does, and refuses to let it spoil his life, makes him the most remarkable person I know.

- 23** You will hear a film star talking about the importance and influence of her grandmother during her childhood. Listen and complete the notes below. Using the notes write two paragraphs about Liliana's grandmother.

Took care of me

- used to
- used to take me
- nursed me during long illness

Made me feel safe

- one thing in my life that never
- always there when I

Taught me everything

- always things to me
- taught me the difference between and

- 24** Fill in the topic sentences in the text opposite, then give the paragraph outline. What information is included in each paragraph? What tenses have been used? Why?

- a During the years I worked with her, my admiration for Miriam steadily increased.
- b Her ability to deal with several matters at once seemed almost miraculous.
- c My first impression of her was one of politeness verging on stiffness.
- d All in all, Miriam is the most admirable person I've ever met.
- e The most striking thing about Miriam, though, was her sensitivity towards others.
- f On my first day of work at Acrol Assurance I arrived nervous, soaking wet — and nearly half an hour late.



Describe a person who has influenced your life and explain why you admire him/her.

1 I had forgotten to take an umbrella, had missed the bus and was not ready for a good scolding. It was then that I met Miriam Bellings, the Managing Director, who was to have an enormous influence on my life and career.

2 She was a small, birdlike woman, her appearance giving the impression of a nervous, easily-flustered person. I soon learnt, however, that her true character was calm, warm and kind, yet unbendingly professional. After reminding me that lateness would not be tolerated in the office, she laughingly confessed to me that she had been over an hour late on her first morning because she had lost her way, which was typical of her sympathetic character. She then proceeded to explain the workings of the office to me with such clarity and accuracy, and with such patience to my rather naive questions, that I was left with the impression that she was a sort of superwoman of office management.

3 No crisis in the office ever caught her off-guard, and on the rare occasions when she could not answer a question, she would make sure that she had an answer for you within the hour.

4 I remember on one occasion when nearly everyone in the office had gone down with the flu, Miriam managed to keep the office running smoothly without seeming stressed or harassed in the least. We sometimes used to joke that if everyone in the office had been absent on the same day, Miriam would not even have noticed!

5 Although she had never married, she seemed to have a deep understanding of family relationships, and could always tell when an employee was having problems at home. She was not a "pull-yourself-together" sort of boss. If she sensed that something was wrong, she would call you into her office and encourage you to talk. Not only was she a good listener, but the advice offered was always sound as well.

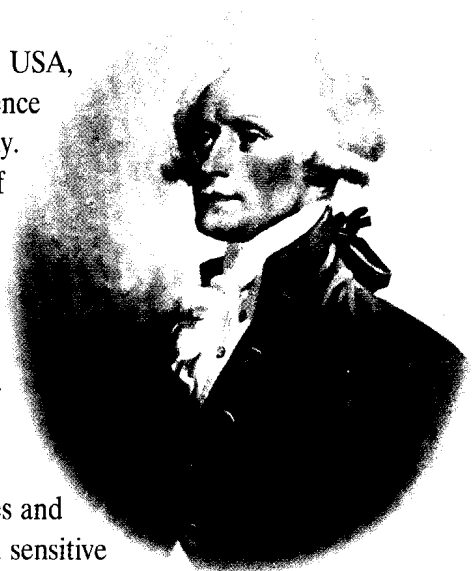
6 I lost touch with Miriam after her retirement, but I will always remember her as the "guiding light" in my working life, the woman who — through her example, help and advice — enabled me to be as successful as I am today.

25 Read the model below and correct the highlighted words. Write S for spelling, WO for word order, G for grammar, P for punctuation or WW for wrong word. Then, fill in the paragraph plan.

Describe an important person from the past and explain why he/she is of significant importance

Paragraph 1
who the person is

Thomas Jefferson, who was born **on** ^{in G} 1743 in Virginia, USA, was an extraordinarily able and gifted man **who's** influence on American politics and culture is still felt to this day. Best known as the author of the Declaration of Independence, (which stated America's reasons for needing to be free of British rule) and as the third president of the United States, Jefferson was a highly educated and multi-talented man **which** left his mark not only on politics but on agriculture, architecture, linguistics and philosophy, as well.



Paragraph 2

Jefferson was a tall, well-built man with striking features and a memorable physical presence. He was perceptive and sensitive in personal relations and, although **was he** involved in many political controversies, he did not bear grudges against his opponents. Despite the fact that he was a public figure, and often had as **much** as fifty people staying in his home, he was a very private person who kept his private life to himself. He was a linguistically learned man who **at least knew** six languages, had a keen interest in developing new varieties of food plants, instigated the first systematic study of American Indian dialects and designed his own home, Monticello, an outstanding example of 18th century neo-classical architecture.

Paragraph 3

Admirable in many ways, this man was most to be respected for his belief in the freedom of the individual, which he spent all of his life fighting for. His **more** fundamental belief was that every person has the right to be economically independent and to decide his or her own destiny, and this philosophy formed the basis of American thought which **still today survives**. He was scandalised by proposals to establish a dictatorship in the United **states**, and declared that "the very thought alone was treason against the people".

Paragraph 4

Jefferson believed in the importance of education for **whole** people. He held the belief that no country could function properly if its citizens were uneducated, and he fought **hardly** for the establishment of schools and also founded the University of Virginia, even designing the buildings and supervising their construction himself. He **refered** to this act as "The last service I can render my country", and it was indeed a valuable one.

Paragraph 5

All in all, Thomas Jefferson was a person **who he** earned esteem and affection **while** his lifetime, and who deserves our respect for his influence on political thought and for the long-lasting effects of all that he accomplished during his long and fruitful career.

Unit 1 Describing People

26 Descriptions of people can be found in stories, letters of recommendation, police reports, newspaper articles etc. Read the following extracts and decide:

- where each extract is taken from.
- who the writer of each extract is.
- who each extract is addressed to.
- which extracts are written in formal/informal style.

1 To whom it may concern:

Paul Webster has been in our employment for the last five years. During that time, I have found him to be honest, reliable and trustworthy. He has proven himself to be a dedicated and highly-motivated member of our workforce. Always professional in his appearance and approach to his responsibilities, Mr Webster has been a great asset to our company and I have no hesitation in recommending him for any related post.



4 Although a career-girl through and through, Sonya claims motherhood hasn't changed her life very much. "I was lucky to be able to work from home," says the bright, 25-year-old publicity agent. Her short brown hair swept behind her ears and minimal use of make-up are signs that she has to be practical about combining the joint responsibilities of work and parenthood. But her trim figure and professional clothes help ensure that she maintains her dynamic business-woman appearance.



2 Meryl Streep may be successful and talented, but she is not entirely satisfied that she is doing her best in either of her roles, as an actress or as a parent. Each job takes time and energy from the other, and she feels that if she had dedicated herself to one career she would have had greater satisfaction. But when we asked her what she would do if she had to choose between her glamorous acting career and motherhood she replied, "I cannot live without either!"



5 She was a lively child with long, golden hair and tight curls. She had inherited her mother's big blue eyes but when she smiled, I could see that she was the image of her father. There was such a directness in the way that she looked at you, while her thin lips gave away the insecurity that Michael had shown all those years before. She was so much his daughter and, while I played with her, all the old, painful memories came flooding back.

3 Matthew Robbins was reported missing on the night of Saturday 22nd August. He is of African origin, aged thirty-two, and of medium height (5 feet 10). He has a muscular frame and his black hair is cropped short. He also has a small moustache and a goatee. Robbins was last seen in the Maxwell Park area and was wearing a grey vest-type T-shirt and black jeans at the time. Robbin's family are appealing for any information on his whereabouts.



- 27** Read the extracts and write appropriate topic sentences for them. Where do you think the extracts are taken from?



1

.....

.....

.....

This is not immediately apparent as she still looks very much the same. Her youthful face and slim figure remain unchanged, and her clothes are as elegant as ever. However, to people who know her well the change is obvious. She was once a carefree and even frivolous person, but the difficult circumstances of her life have made her a more serious, compassionate and understanding person.

2

.....

.....

.....

There is nothing he cannot succeed in once he sets his mind to it. As a student at university, he worked at weekends in order to help pay his way while completing his degree in business studies. He started out at the bottom of the company, but his dedication and determination have meant that after just ten years he is now a director. Over the years his positive qualities have brought him success repeatedly, and he has earned the admiration of all who know him.



3

.....

.....

It's not that he's ever done anything to me or to any of our colleagues, but there's something about the way he looks at you that makes you feel uneasy. He is quite good-looking, but there is a rather sly, cagey look in his small brown eyes that makes you distrust him from the moment you meet him. He tends to be obsequious as well, telling everyone exactly what they want to hear and over-complimentary to anyone in a higher position than his. There may be no real basis for my dislike, but he is a person I simply cannot trust.



DISCUSS & WRITE

- 28** Look at the following composition task instructions and answer the questions below.

a) Describe a person from your past you would like to see again, and explain why.


- 1 What are the key words in the task instructions?
- 2 What do the phrases "your past" and "see again" suggest?
- 3 Could you choose to describe someone you dislike? Why (not)?
- 4 Which features/aspects of description will you include?
- 5 What reasons can you think of in answer to the "explain" part?
- 6 What examples/justification could you include?
- 7 What would a suitable paragraph plan for this composition task be?

b) Describe a person you dislike, and explain why you feel this way about him or her.

- 1 What are the key words in the task instructions?
- 2 Should you describe someone you know personally? Why (not)?
- 3 Should all of your description emphasise negative features?
- 4 Which features/aspects of description will you include?
- 5 What reasons can you think of in answer to the "explain" part?
- 6 What examples/justification could you include?
- 7 What would a suitable paragraph plan for this composition task be?

- 29** Choose ONE of the composition tasks above, and write a complete paragraph plan with notes. Then write the composition in about 350 words.

UNIT 2 Describing Places/Buildings

- 1  You will hear a man talking to a travel agent about a city he finally decides to visit. Read the table then listen to the tape and tick the information mentioned. Finally, use the table to talk about the city described.

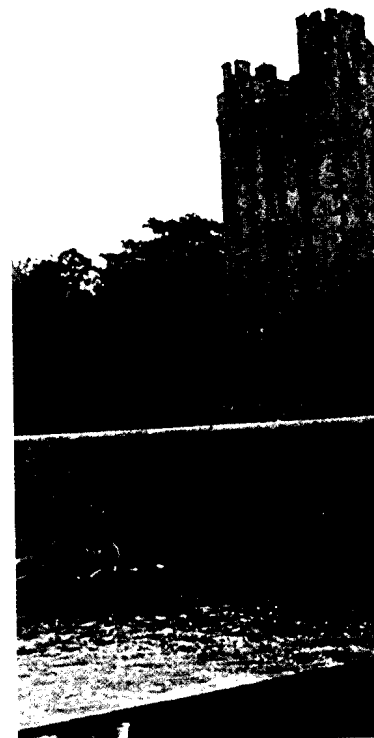
name: Athens ☐ Dublin ☐ Edinburgh ☐
 location: Greece ☐ Ireland ☐ Scotland ☐
 reason for visiting: holiday ☐ business ☐
 sights: castle ☐ Royal Palace ☐ St Patrick's Cathedral ☐
 free-time activities: pubs ☐ museums ☐ theatres ☐ cinemas ☐
 cafés ☐ parks ☐ funfairs ☐ bistros ☐
 recommendation: highly recommended ☐ expensive ☐ boring ☐

A composition describing a place/building should consist of:

- an **introduction** giving brief information about the name and location of the place/building and stating the reason for choosing to write about it (*e.g. What it is famous for, what makes it so special, etc.*)
 - a **main body** giving both general and specific details about the place/building usually moving from the general features to specific ones. i) when you describe a **place** you should give the overall impression by referring to landscape, buildings, landmarks, etc. and particular details (sights to see, places to go, things to do) ii) when you describe a **building** you should write about its surroundings (*e.g. situated in Oxford Street ...*), then give a detailed description of its exterior and interior; and,
 - a **conclusion** in which you express your feelings or opinion concerning the subject or give a recommendation.
- You may also be asked to **explain why** a particular place is important to you, popular, etc. Note that the number and length of paragraphs varies depending on the topic.
 - Descriptions of places/buildings may be included in several other types of writing tasks, such as stories, assessment reports, articles, brochures, letters and magazine articles.

Points to Consider

- Descriptions of places/buildings may include: **factual information** such as age, size, colour, materials, etc (*e.g. The temple, with 10-metre tall marble columns, was built in 800 BC.*), details relating to the **senses** (sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste) to suggest **mood and atmosphere** (*e.g. Visitors' footsteps on the worn stone floors echo through the cool, dark corridors, disturbing the tranquil silence.*), **opinions/impressions** of the place or building (*e.g. Tourists are fascinated by its air of mystery.*)
- Each aspect of the description should be presented in a separate paragraph beginning with a clear topic sentence.
- The use of descriptive vocabulary (*e.g. exquisite, exclusive, towering, etc.*), a variety of linking words and structures as well as narrative techniques will make your writing more interesting.
- Present tenses are normally used when describing a place for a tourist brochure or a magazine article. Past tenses are normally used when describing a visit to a place/building. First and second conditionals (will/would) can be used when you describe your ideal city/house, etc. Note that when we give factual information about a place or building this is normally given using Present tenses. (*e.g. I flew to Madrid last Monday. Madrid is situated in the central point of the Iberian peninsula with a population of about 3,000,000.*)



Introduction

Paragraph 1

name/location/population of the place, reason for choosing the place

Main Body

Paragraphs 2 - 3

general features and particular details

(place: surroundings, sights, facilities, free-time activities

building: surroundings, detailed description of exterior/interior)

Paragraphs 4 - 5

explanation and example/justification

Conclusion

Final Paragraph

comments/feelings and/or a recommendation

- 2 Read the model below and fill in the plan on the right. Then, look at the highlighted adjective-noun combinations, close your books and try to remember as many of them as possible.

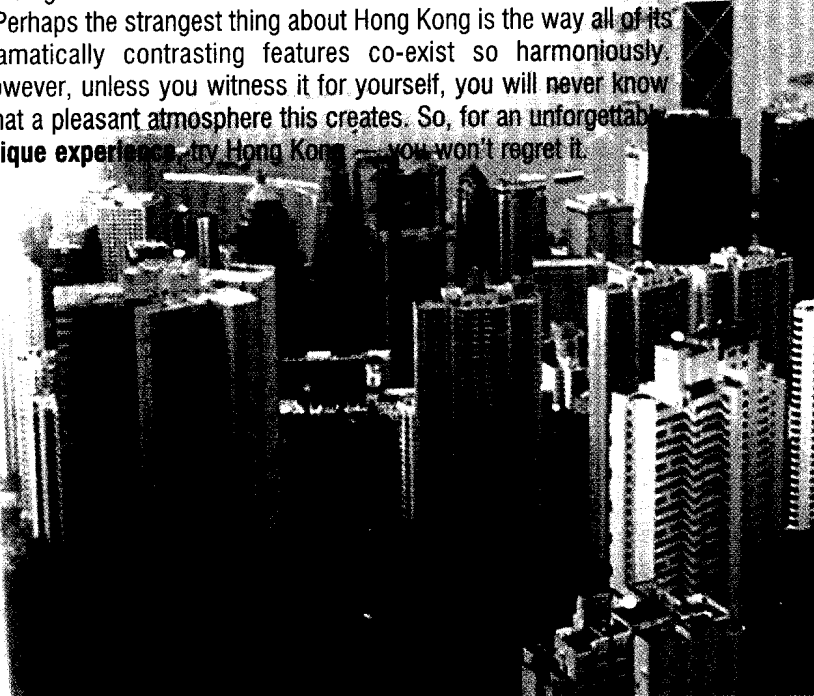
Describe a large, busy city

Built around a small peninsula in the south east of China, Hong Kong, now one of the most densely populated places on earth, is a city of extreme contrasts, where East meets West, and the latest technology is equally as important as ancient customs are.

The streets of Hong Kong are a frenzy of activity and **deafening noise**. The roads are congested with vehicles, from **sparkling limousines** to dusty rickshaws, while **countless hordes** of people stream past on the pavements, and in the crowded narrow alleyways, the senses of the pedestrian are bombarded with a **bewildering variety** of **exotic sights** and smells. In contrast, not far from the **chaotic, cramped city centre** lie parks with **cool streams**, shrines and **chirping birds**. Meanwhile, **tranquil mountains** form a breathtaking backdrop to the **towering skyscrapers** of steel and concrete packed closely around the harbour, where huge modern ships float alongside little Chinese junks.

Below the **bright neon lights**, garishly advertising every brand name conceivable, visitors will find an endless variety of shops and restaurants competing for space on Hong Kong's **manic streets**. You can buy anything here, ranging from state-of-the-art computer technology to hand-made silk suits. There are also fish and bird markets all over the city, where heaps of **gleaming silver fish** can be found displayed next to **brilliantly-coloured squawking parrots**. Tourists and locals alike flock to the Jade Market, hidden on a side street, with its intricately-carved pieces depicting Chinese icons, Buddhas and dragons made of smooth green stone. For food, Hong Kong is second to none, as it offers a wide choice of dishes in all sorts of eating establishments. The city's nightlife, like its shops and restaurants, caters for all tastes, whether you are searching for the opportunity to serenade your loved one in a karaoke bar or are simply after a beer and a bit of dancing.

Perhaps the strangest thing about Hong Kong is the way all of its dramatically contrasting features co-exist so harmoniously. However, unless you witness it for yourself, you will never know what a pleasant atmosphere this creates. So, for an unforgettable **unique experience**, try Hong Kong — you won't regret it.



• Introduction

location, population, reason

• Main Body

• general features

.....

.....

.....

• particular details

.....

.....

.....

• Conclusion

.....

.....

Location Verbs and Prepositions

- There are a number of verbs used to describe the location and/or surroundings of a place. These may explain **position** (e.g. *the old house is situated next to/is surrounded by ..*); they may also give some suggestion of **movement** (e.g. *the road leads up to/winds past ...*) and/or **action** (e.g. *the statue towers above/stands at the top of ...*).
- These verbs are naturally used with **prepositions** and **prepositional/adverbial phrases** (e.g. *leads up to - winds past - stands at the top of, etc*).

- 3** Fill in the gaps with words from the list below. Use the words only once.
stretch out, is set in, winds through, nestles at, is perched on, curves around, sprawl out, is located in, slopes down to

- 1 The small house, which the centre of town, is packed with antiques.
- 2 The narrow country lane the wooded valley.
- 3 The steep hillside the seashore.
- 4 The hotel the towering Welsh mountains.
- 5 The river the base of the mountain.
- 6 The plains in every direction.
- 7 The cabin precariously a clifftop.
- 8 The suburbs into the countryside.
- 9 A tiny village the foot of the high mountain.

- 4** Read the following description. Fill in each of the gaps with a suitable preposition or adverb and circle each of the 'location' verbs.

Standing **1)** at the top of the old stone steps, you can see the variety of architectural styles **2)** the houses that line the main street. The steps lead **3)** to a small, open area just **4)** the corner **5)** the main street.

Facing you as you stand **6)** the bottom of the steps is a shop, which is **7)** a four-storey building that stands **8)** the corner of the street.

9) your right there are a few tables **10)** the pavement **11)** a small café which is housed **12)** a large, imposing building. A small balcony **13)** the first floor hangs **14)** the entrance to the café.

Further **15)** the street, **16)** the right hand side is a quaint two-storey building with gable windows built into the attic. The street disappears **17)** the distance as the wooded hillside rises **18)** the whole scene.

Participles & Relative Clauses

Short sentences with the same subject may be joined with **participles** (~ing/~ed) or **relative pronouns** (who/which/whose).

The cottage stands at the top of a cliff. It faces out to sea.

The cottage, which stands at the top of a cliff, faces out to sea.

The cottage, standing at the top of a cliff, faces out to sea.

The farmhouse was built in 1850.

It is surrounded by fields.

The farmhouse, [which was] built in 1850, is surrounded by fields.

The participial clause is often put at the beginning of the sentence:

Standing at the top of a cliff, the cottage faces out to sea.

Built in 1850, the farmhouse is surrounded by fields.

Note how the meaning of the sentence changes when two sentences with different subjects are joined with a participle.

① Tourists walk through the streets.

② Noises and smells greet them.

③ Walking through the streets, noises and smells greet the tourists.

This means that the noises and smells are walking! Instead, you must keep the same subject for both clauses, or use time words such as "while":

Walking through the streets, tourists are greeted by noises and smells.

While the tourists walk through the streets, noises and smells greet them.

- 5** Link the sentences below starting each sentence with the correct form of the word(s) in bold.

- 1 The castle **dominates** the skyline. It is built of local stone.
- 2 The museum **was opened** in 1939. It is visited by thousands of people every day.
- 3 The temple **is surrounded by** trees. It is difficult to see from a distance.
- 4 Greater London **covers** 610 square miles. It is the largest city in Britain.
- 5 The monument **was erected** in 1919. It is a memorial to those who died in World War I.



6 Correct the following sentences as in the example.

e.g. *Sinking behind the mountain, I watched the sun fill the sky with red.* (WRONG)

Sinking behind the mountain, the sun filled the sky with red. (CORRECT)

OR *As I watched the sun sinking behind the mountain, it filled the sky with red.* (CORRECT)

- 1 Stretching into the distance, we were amazed by the length of the queue.
- 2 Squeezing your way onto the packed bus, the other passengers press even closer together to make room for you.
- 3 Shuffling towards the supermarket's busy tills, heavy baskets hang from the shoppers' tired arms.
- 4 Standing squashed among the screaming fans, the roar of the enormous crowd was deafening.

Descriptions of places often include subjects such as a popular restaurant, a busy market, etc. In a description of this sort, you should describe both the place and the activity (people, cars, commotion, etc). You may describe details relating to the **senses** (sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste) to suggest **mood** and **atmosphere** (e.g. *The bazaar is a riot of exotic smells, dazzling colours and a deafening babble of voices ...*).

- In order to describe a human scene you will need to use a variety of words and phrases relating to **crowds** (e.g. *busy, crowded, bustling, etc*) and **activity** (e.g. *customers queue up, passengers rush to the train, etc*).

8 Identify the sense(s) referred to in each of the phrases below. Then look at the two photographs and decide which each phrase describes. Some phrases may apply to both photographs.

hot, golden sand **touch; sight - B**
 hum of laughter and voices
 clinking glasses
 colourful sails
 strong odour of fish
 mouth-watering plates of food
 cries of seagulls
 warm sun on white buildings
 splash of breaking waves
 salty water



7 Read the following descriptions, underline the phrases which refer to the senses and identify each sense. What tenses are used in each description? Why?

A The market buzzes with the sound of women's voices, while the smells of fresh fish, vegetables and spices fill the hot, humid air. Crowds of shoppers jostle each other as they squeeze past the displays of goods, voices grow louder as the people haggle over prices, and the clang of metal bowls and boxes rings through the market.



B A faint smell of crushed grass wafted up from the court as the hot sun beat down on the crowd watching the players. The silence was punctuated by the rhythmic sound of the tennis ball and the muted gasps of the spectators; then, suddenly, the crowd surged to their feet with a roar.



9 Now read this description of photograph A and use the notes above with further details of your own to write a similar description of photograph B.

Approaching the central square, you could hear the hum of laughter and voices, along with the clinking of glasses from the outdoor cafés and restaurants. There was a friendly, relaxed atmosphere as the tourists enjoyed their midday meal. Busy waiters bustled to and fro carrying mouth-watering plates of food, against a picturesque background of bright sun shining on the white buildings.

Unit 2 Describing Places/Buildings

- 10** In the skeleton sentences below, the word underlined is the main verb of the sentence. Write each as a complete sentence as in the example.

e.g. *Stand / top / hill / massive fortress / dominate / city*

Standing at the top of the hill, the massive fortress dominates the city.

- 1 Palm trees / sway / gentle evening breeze / frame / sun / set / horizon.
- 2 Stand / top / cliffs / you can / hear / waves / crash / rocks below.
- 3 Line / cobbled street / be / row / terraced houses / design / John Wood.
- 4 Surround / mountains / all sides / city / look / as if / be in / enormous bowl.

When describing a **monument**, you should include factual information (age, size, reason built, etc), a description of the surrounding area and comments/feelings. Do not include information about sights, facilities or activities.

- 11** You will hear part of a TV documentary describing Nelson's Column. Listen and complete the notes below. Then, looking at your notes, describe the monument.

Factual Information

- Built: 18..... - 18.....
- Size: the column stands metres high
- Reason: commemorate Nelson's at the Battle of Trafalgar

Surroundings

- the column stands at the centre of Trafalgar Square in the heart of
- the square is the site of a beautiful, the National and other impressive buildings
- at street level the column is flanked by four lions

Comments/Feelings

- the monument towers above the London as a reminder of grander days in Britain's when this once-great nation ruled the seas



- 12** Look at the brief description below. What is the topic of each paragraph? Circle the location verbs used in the description and underline the words/phrases used to express impression/opinion.

The construction of the monument on Mount Rushmore began in 1927 and finished in 1941. The memorial, which attracts over two million tourists every year, commemorates four former presidents of the USA and consists of four heads carved out of granite, each standing sixty feet high.

Situated in the Black Hills of South Dakota, the memorial stands out from the mountainside which rises high above the surrounding farmland, and can be clearly seen from a far distance.

To Americans, the spectacle of these massive heads is a powerful reminder of their country's historic glories and achievements, while foreign tourists are struck by the strange sight of these dignified faces lending a human form to the bare mountain scenery.



- 13** Using the text in Ex. 12 as a model and your notes from Ex. 11, write a description of Nelson's Column, in about 200 words.

- 14** You will hear two friends talking about a particular place. Read the questions, then listen to the cassette and answer them. Looking at your answers, talk about the place, then write a description of it.

- 1 What place are they talking about?
- 2 Where is it?
- 3 How old is it?
- 4 What is it built of?
- 5 How many rooms are there?
- 6 How does he feel about the place?

CHARACTERISTICS OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL STYLE

Descriptions of places can be written in a formal or informal style depending on whom they are addressed to and how the writer wants to present the description. For example, a description of a place you visited in a letter to a friend of yours would be informal, whereas a description of a place issued by the Tourist Authority in order to promote the place would be written in a formal style.

Formal style is characterised by an impersonal non-emotional way of expressing your ideas, frequent use of the passive, non-colloquial English and complex sentences. Short forms are acceptable only in quotes.

Informal style is characterised by a personal, emotional and chatty way of expressing your ideas and use of colloquial English (idiomatic expressions), idioms and short forms.

Compare the examples: — *The cottage, once inhabited by a famous poet, was built atop a steep, rocky hillside overlooking an idyllic landscape of lush fields divided by ancient dry stone walls.* (formal) — *My dad's cottage is out of this world as it's right on the top of a hill and looks down on gorgeous green fields which are split up by old dry stone walls.* (informal)



- 15** Which of the following extracts is a formal description and which is an informal one? Why? Where has each extract been taken from?

Corfe Castle

The medieval castle of Corfe is perched high on a hill overlooking the small community below. The ruins stand as a reminder of the English Civil Wars when the castle was dismantled by Parliamentary forces in 1646. Today, visitors are attracted by the opportunity to marvel at the splendours of a bygone age, and leave behind, for a moment, the cares of the modern world.



Stonehenge

I have to admit I was a bit disappointed when I realised Stonehenge isn't like it looks in the pictures. I mean, you imagine it being sort of lonely and isolated, but actually there are tourists everywhere. We couldn't go right up to it either because it's surrounded by a fence. Even so, it was pretty impressive. How those ancient people moved such huge stones is anybody's guess, but they certainly made an amazing structure! I felt tiny standing there.

Expressing Impressions & Reactions

- You can express **positive** impressions of a place by:
 - a using a variety of **adjectives** such as:
awe-inspiring, breathtaking, delightful, elaborate, eye-catching, exquisite, majestic, outstanding, overwhelming, picturesque, quaint, spellbinding, superb, tranquil, etc
 - e.g. *The castle, standing at the top of the mountain overlooking the city, is awe-inspiring.*
 - b using a variety of **present or past participles** from such verbs as:
amaze, astonish, astound, impress, inspire, overwhelm, refresh, stimulate, etc
 - e.g. *I was/felt astounded at how beautiful Florida is in winter.*
... the astonishing image of children pushing rickshaws.
 - c using a variety of **nouns** in expressions such as:
to my amazement/astonishment/delight/surprise/etc
 - e.g. *To my delight, the place had kept its character.*
- You can express **negative** impressions of a place by:
 - a using a variety of **adjectives** such as:
barren, bleak, derelict, dilapidated, disreputable, inhospitable, neglected, squalid, etc
 - e.g. *The building was in a dilapidated state.*
 - b using a variety of **present or past participles** from such verbs as:
depress, disappoint, dismay, terrify, shock, etc
 - e.g. *... the disappointing view of the unsightly housing.*
 - c using a variety of **nouns** in expressions such as:
to my disappointment/surprise/etc
 - e.g. *To my disappointment, the once-tranquil village had turned into a crowded tourist resort.*

16 Choose the most appropriate word from those given in brackets, and put it into the correct form to fill in the gaps in the following sentences.

e.g. Rio is a thrilling place to visit, with its riotous colours and raucous noise.
 (thrill/relax/refresh)

- 1 To the _____ of most visitors, the caves in the area cannot be visited, as they have been declared unsafe. (disappoint/delight/impress)
- 2 Several old, traditional houses have been converted into quaint pensions which tourists find _____. (horror/delight/depress)
- 3 Visitors are _____ during the trip up the steep mountain path, but the view makes it worthwhile. (puzzle/terrify/offend)
- 4 It is _____ to see how quickly the area where I grew up is being spoiled. (shock/excite/inspire)
- 5 The enormous ancient structures strike people as _____, since even using modern equipment they would be difficult to construct. (amuse/dismay/amaze)

17 Read the brief descriptions 1 and replace each of the underlined words or phrases with the suitable word from the list given

Description A

abandoned, bleak, cramped, miserable, run-down

The row of (1) empty houses along the bank of a stagnant canal present a (2) sad picture. When I lived in, they were (3) too small, filthy and in need of paint. Now they are (4) old and broken, their windows boarded over and fences sagging. The landscape in which they stand is (5) empty and ugly; behind the canal and ruined houses stretch flat fields with no trees or grass.

Description B

astounded, enormous, exquisite, imposing, tranquil

Visitors to the cathedral are usually (6) surprised at the (7) impressive elegance of its size and proportions. The (8) very big stained-glass windows with their (9) wonderful centuries-old pictures flood the interior with soft light and colour, creating (10) peaceful, quiet atmosphere.

Now replace each of the ten words you have just used with its synonym from the following list.

astounded, bare, crowded, deserted, depressing, dilapidated, magnificent, massive, serene, superb



Useful Language: Explaining Impressions

- Paris **makes an immediate/enduring/lasting impression on** all who visit it, since it is such a glamorous city.
What strikes/impresses/delights visitors about the resort most **is** its unique surroundings.
The most noticeable/outstanding feature of the palace **is** its golden dome.
 A huge statue of a lion **is the first thing one notices** upon entering the temple.
One cannot help but be impressed/moved/struck by the natural beauty of the region.
Without doubt, the most impressive thing about San Francisco **is** the Golden Gate Bridge.
The thing which makes the strongest/most enduring impression is the hospitality of the locals.
 I **was immediately struck by** the staggering number of huge skyscrapers.
One particularly marvels/wonders at the variety of attractions offered.
- **The first thing one notices about** the house is its overgrown garden.
The reason that the area is so depressing **is that** there are so many derelict buildings.
 The filthy, congested streets **confirmed my initial impression** that it was an unpleasant city.
 Undoubtedly, **the thing/feature that will disappoint** any visitor **is** the lack of facilities.

18 Rewrite the sentences using the words in bold without changing the meaning.

- 1 When visiting Paris, one particularly marvels at the incredible architecture of the Pompidou Centre.
help
*e.g. When visiting Paris, one **cannot help but marvel** at the incredible ...*
- 2 What impressed me most about the entire building was the lavishly-decorated reception hall.
strongest
- 3 The first thing that one notices about the city is that there are so many well-preserved medieval buildings.
noticeable
- 4 Undoubtedly the thing that will impress you most about Sydney is the amazing Opera House.
doubt
- 5 What strikes visitors to Mykonos most is the perfect combination of glamour and tradition.
immediate

19 Read the extract below and replace the underlined words and phrases with phrases from the following list.

- **take a particular delight in**
- **the thing which makes the strongest impression**
- **here one has the leisure to appreciate**
- **few visitors can fail to be charmed by**
- **to sum up**
- **furthermore, one cannot help but wonder at**
- **gives the impression of being**
- **hustle and bustle**
- **combines the spirit of a community with a well-deserved respect for nature**
- **paid them the compliment of**

Describe a place in the countryside and explain why it is worth visiting.

Concerning Littlewood village itself, (1) what you notice is the hospitality of the locals. (2) Everyone enjoys the welcoming smiles and the genuine interest that the villagers show in anyone who has (3) bothered visiting their small community. It is as if they (4) really like sharing their charming village with outsiders.

(5) Also, anyone would like the natural beauty of the region. Sheltered from the outside world by the hills which surround it, the village (6) seems untouched by the technological age and the (7) noisy hurry of modern towns. (8) You can enjoy the late afternoon sun glistening on the river or shining through the autumn leaves, and realise that this is a very special place.

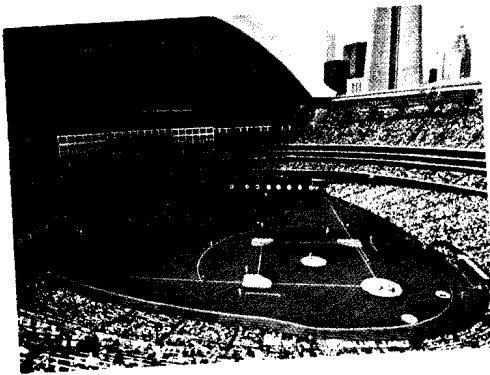
(9) So, Littlewood (10) is a place with nice people and scenery. For anyone who wants to escape from the pressures of modern life for a while, it is well worth a visit.

Unit 2 Describing Places/Buildings

20 Read the following description. Then, using the notes below, rewrite it in a formal style. Start like this. *Toronto is a truly impressive city ...*

Toronto is a really great city! There are so many places for you to see and things to do that you'll hardly have time to rest while you're there.

One of the things that will immediately impress you is the architecture of the buildings. It's definitely a sightseer's paradise. You can go up the CN Tower, which is one of the tallest buildings in the world, and you can have a wonderful dinner in the revolving restaurant at the top of the Tower. What a view! You'll be able to see the whole of Toronto. You can also visit the Casa Loma, which is just like a fairy-tale castle. A millionaire built it at the beginning of the century. The Skydome is another place that you'll find amazing. It's an ultra modern sports stadium that has a roof that opens and closes, so matches or concerts don't have to be called off when it rains or snows!



- NOTES:
- impressive city
 - an ideal place for those ...
 - impressive architecture
 - one place especially worth visiting ...
 - visitors can enjoy dining ...
 - spectacular view of ...
 - resembling a castle
 - built at the turn of the century
 - retractable roof
 - events are held all year round

• Certain techniques can be used to make your description more vivid. You can start or end your description by:

- using your senses to describe the weather, surroundings, etc
- using direct speech
- asking a rhetorical question (a question which doesn't need an answer)
- creating mystery, suspense or anticipation
- addressing the reader directly
- describing people's feelings about or reactions to the place, building or monument
- using a quotation (e.g. As Ernest Hemingway once said, "Paris is a movable feast.")

21 Read the following paragraphs and identify the narrative techniques which have been used in each one.

1 "Yes, it's been empty for years," the man said as we stood outside the old one-room schoolhouse. Some of my earliest memories are associated with that place, and it seemed a shame that the big room no longer rang with the voices of happy children.

2 I shivered in the chill, damp air as entered the old one-room schoolhouse. It smelt of mildew and dust, and I could see stains on the walls where the rain had come through the roof. This abandoned place had once been the scene of lively lessons for twenty children including myself.

3 Standing outside the door of the abandoned one-room schoolhouse, I heard a strange noise coming from inside. I knew it had been empty for years but I seemed to hear the sound of children's voices. Holding my breath, I pushed the door open.

4 How many people have had the opportunity to be educated in an old one-room country schoolhouse? When I went back to visit my old school, which is now no longer used, I suddenly realised how lucky I had been, and what an influence the place and its surroundings had had on my life.

5 Everyone who went to the old one-room school in my village feels the same way about it. They all remember the time they spent there as the best years of their lives, and I believe the place itself had an influence on this feeling.

6 You may have attended a big, inner-city school with a library, labs, a gymnasium and all the facilities considered necessary for a good education. In that case, you cannot imagine what it is like to go to a tiny one-room school surrounded by green, rolling countryside.

7 Shakespeare's description of "the wretched schoolboy ... creeping like a snail to school" certainly does not apply to my schooldays. I attended a one-room country school and, as I remember, going there was always a pleasure. I think this was partly due to the beauty and quaintness of the place itself.

22 Write possible beginnings and endings for a composition entitled "The city I admire most."

- 23** Read the models and give the paragraph plan. Which of the models involves narration? How do these two models differ (paragraphs, tenses, style etc)? Where would you find these pieces of writing?

Model A

Describe a visit to a famous capital city you particularly enjoyed

I spent last weekend with my friend Leo in the Hungarian capital, Budapest. Leo was anxious for me to join him for the St. Stephen's Day celebrations and I was only too glad to oblige.

After arriving at Ferihegy Airport, Leo took me on a whirlwind tour of the city so I could get my bearings. The sixteen mile journey from the airport to the city centre took us through Pest, the area situated to the east of the Danube River. We sped through streets of stunning Baroque architecture and past museums which I couldn't wait to visit. After crossing the river, via the Szecheny Chain Bridge, we entered Buda, which was officially joined together with Pest in 1873 to form the modern-day capital. I was delighted with the fantastic view of Buda Castle and the Citadel, sat atop the three hills which line the banks of the river. After I had been introduced to Leo's family, we went to explore the city together. We paused to admire Buda's cobbled-streets and Gothic architecture, and visited some museums before we went back home and enjoyed a typical Hungarian meal Leo's mother had carefully prepared for us.

The next day, I had the chance to explore Budapest more thoroughly. After a brief visit to the excellent Museum of Fine Art, I went to see the animals at Budapest Zoo before sampling some more delicious Hungarian cuisine for lunch at a lovely little restaurant. In the afternoon, I went back to Buda where I was amazed to discover that the castle houses not only the National Gallery, but also the National Library and Castle Museum too. That evening, however, was certainly the highlight of my trip. After a short nap, I returned, once more, to Buda Castle with Leo, where we watched the extravagant fireworks display held to celebrate St. Stephen's Day.

I spent an interesting couple of days in Budapest and managed to soak up a lot of Hungarian culture and history thanks to Leo and his captivating stories. Although I only spent a short time there, I feel I left Budapest with a vivid insight into Hungarian life.



Model B

Describe a famous capital city

Budapest, the Hungarian capital, is situated on the glorious Danube River in western Hungary. Before amalgamation in 1873, the site was home to two separate towns, Buda and Pest, located on either side of the river. The city's fascinating variety of architectural styles brings its long and turbulent history alive for the visitor, and because of this it is a fabulous location for a trip into the past.

Once you have arrived in the city centre from nearby Ferihegy Airport, take a tour round the entire city so you can find your bearings and get a taste of this fantastic city's atmosphere. Buda, which can be reached by means of the cheap and efficient underground train or the Szecheny Chain Bridge, is the oldest part of the city. First settled in the Middle Ages, its cobbled streets and Gothic houses are dominated by the recently-restored Buda Castle and the Citadel on their imposing hilltop sites. The castle is definitely worth visiting as it houses the National Library, the Castle Museum and the National Gallery. Across the river, in Pest, you will find stunning examples of Baroque architecture, and a number of fascinating museums. Impossible to miss is the Millennium Monument, a striking colonnade displaying statues of Hungarian kings and leaders, along with a huge statue of the archangel Gabriel surmounting a 188-foot-high central column.

But Budapest is not just a place to look at. There are excellent shopping facilities, a fascinating zoo, and plenty of theatres and concert halls offering fine performances. You can end your day by having a delicious meal in one of the many traditional restaurants, and if you are lucky enough to be in Budapest on St. Stephen's Day, you can witness the stunning fireworks display which is launched from the Citadel.

All in all, Budapest is a delightful city which embodies centuries of the Eastern European past. Its fascination is partly due to the Hungarians' resourcefulness, a quality necessary to ensure the survival of a city which has had to be rebuilt so many times. Budapest is well worth a visit at any time of the year.

Interpreting the topic

- Various composition tasks ask you to describe a place, building or monument; however this description may be only **one part of the composition**. Composition tasks often ask you to describe a place, building or monument and to **explain** why you have chosen it, why it is important, etc.

In order to complete such a composition task successfully, you should interpret the instructions carefully and choose the aspects which are most relevant to the particular question.

e.g. "Describe a place you have recently visited and explain why you would like to visit the place again in the future."

In answering this question, you should describe the place using narrative style. Past tenses are required. You should also give reasons why you would like to visit the place again, supporting them with justifications.

- Certain questions may ask you to **compare and contrast** two different places, buildings or monuments. Alternatively, you could be asked to describe the ways in which a place has changed over a period of time.

e.g. "Describe two places you have been to on holiday which were very different from each other. Say which you liked better, giving reasons for your choice."

This composition task requires a brief description of the two places, then a comparison of them using suitable linking words and expressions in order to explain the reason why you liked one more than the other.

- Remember to start each paragraph with a topic sentence which summarises what the paragraph is about.

25 Read the model below and give the paragraph plan. Then underline the topic sentences. What tenses have been used? Why? Finally look at the highlighted adjective-noun combinations, then close your books and try to remember as many as possible.

Describe a town or city you have visited and explain why you found it particularly impressive

Situated on two rivers near the Yorkshire Moors, York is a fascinating and **memorable place** to explore. My first visit there was organised while I was in my last year at school. Since it was a history trip, York seemed to be the best choice as it is such a **well-preserved city** which has been of **historical importance** for nearly two thousand years.

Surrounded by high, medieval stone walls, the old part of the town is like a journey back in time. As you wander through the maze of **busy, narrow streets**, you cannot fail to be struck by the quaintness of the **irregular, half-timbered houses**. Rising above these and dominating the skyline are **breathtaking examples** of medieval and Gothic architecture.

Of the many things York has to offer, there are several which stand out in my mind. York Minster, in particular, with its intricate stonework and **stained-glass windows**, is an **awe-inspiring sight**. There are museums of all kinds, including a railway museum and Jorvik Viking Centre, where visitors can learn more about the individual periods of the city's rich history. Finally, the many tea-rooms, coffee-shops and restaurants, each with its own brand of charm, are ideal places to

relax for a while and take in the atmosphere.

One thing that makes York unique among English towns is the care with which it has been preserved. There are few cities where such attention has been paid to detail in an attempt to preserve

the authenticity of the many historic buildings. Medieval and Gothic structures have been painstakingly restored and the present residents seem to share a sense of pride in the splendour of their surroundings.

York is also notable for the fact that it has managed to incorporate modern life into such a **historic setting**. Shops and offices offer a range of goods and services while still maintaining the charm and continuity of a bygone age. All the usual twentieth century requirements catered for in an atmosphere reminiscent of a time when the pace of life was much slower.

The combination of ancient and modern held such a fascination for me during that first visit that I have been back many times since, each time discovering something new.



24 Read the following topics and underline the key words. Which tense should you use? What information will you include in each paragraph?

- Describe the centre of your town or city during the Christmas season.
- Describe a restaurant in your neighbourhood which you would highly recommend, giving reasons why it is worth going to.
- Describe a popular park in the area you live in as it is on a pleasant Sunday morning.
- Describe a place of historical significance, explaining why it is important.
- Describe a visit to a famous place and explain why it is so well-known.
- Describe how you think your town or village have changed in fifty years' time, giving reasons why you think these changes will have occurred.
- Describe a new shop in your town to which you feel will be successful, giving reasons for your opinion.

Making comparisons

To compare places or buildings you can use:

- (just/nearly) as ... (positive degree) ... as *e.g. In those days the main streets were just as congested as they are today.*
- the same as *e.g. The cottage was the same as it had been fifty years before.*
- (relatively/considerably) less ... (positive degree) ... than *e.g. The new buildings are considerably less ornate than the old ones.*
- (much/far/considerably) more + adjective/adverb + than *e.g. The northern area is more picturesque than the eastern area.*
- (by far) the most + adjective *e.g. Hill Manor is by far the most elegant hotel in the region.*
- comparative + and + comparative *e.g. The streets are becoming dirtier and dirtier.*
- the comparative ..., the + comparative *e.g. The further south you travel, the warmer it becomes.*

26 Rewrite the following sentences without changing the meaning.

e.g. The castle was renovated and is now much more impressive than any other in the region.

After being renovated, the castle is now by far the most impressive one/castle in the region.



- 1 Some of the archaeological sites are fascinating, whereas the museums are rather uninteresting.
The museums are not nearly
- 2 The shopping centre in Harries Road has many more shops than the one in Bridge Street.
The shopping centre in Bridge Street hasn't got
- 3 As the population of the city grew the number of schools and hospitals being built increased.
As the population of the city grew, so
- 4 The Anderson Sports Centre has better equipment than the Pollock Centre.
The Pollock Centre is not
- 5 The layout of our old flat was very impractical in comparison to the layout of the new flat.
The layout of our new flat is far
- 6 As the traffic in the city increases, the city centre becomes more congested.
The more traffic there is,

Useful Language

To show similarity: it looks (very much) like/(very similar to, it has the same/similar/ identical ..., it resembles ..., the places are alike/similar ..., both ... and, neither ... nor

e.g. Both Nice and Cannes are cosmopolitan resorts.

To show contrast: it is unlike ... in that, it differs from ..., they differ in that ..., they are different as/because ..., the (main) difference between ... and ... is ..., compared to ..., not only ... but also, although, even though, though, despite, in spite of, whereas, while, but, however, on the other hand, on the contrary, as opposed to, in contrast (with), however, yet, but, even so, still, nevertheless.

e.g. Compared to Paris, Rome is much warmer during summertime.

27 Rewrite each sentence using the word in brackets without changing the meaning.

- 1 Both Blackpool and Brighton have a promenade on the sea front. (alike)
- 2 The new government buildings are very different from the old ones as they are modern and lavish. (compared to)
- 3 The house I grew up in looked almost the same as all the others in the street. (similar)
- 4 In the winter the resort is deserted, whereas in the summer it is swarming with tourists. (in contrast)
- 5 The two areas differ in that one is residential and the other is industrial. (difference)
- 6 The new school is very much like the old one both in design and size. (resembles)
- 7 Mario's restaurant is small and crowded, yet it is more popular than the others with the locals. (Despite)

28 Read the model and underline the phrases showing comparison/contrast, then match the paragraphs with the paragraph descriptions. How does this paragraph plan differ from the one shown on p. 18?

- | | |
|--|--|
| a change 1 and result | d change 2 and result |
| b comments/feelings | e name of street and when writer lived there |
| c description of street as it used to be | f description of street as it is now |

Describe the street you used to live in when you were young and how it has changed, explaining how you feel about those changes

1 I lived on Rose Street until I was eleven, when my father got a better job and we could afford to move to a nicer part of town. Nevertheless, I still felt attached to my old home until I returned there ten years later, only to be astounded by the way it had changed.

2 Rose Street, as I remembered it, was a warm, neighbourly place. Although some of the ageing blocks of flats were in need of renovation, they were clearly in a much better state of repair than those in other parts of the town. It was also a considerably safer place to live, with relatively little crime compared to other areas. There were only a few shops in our street; a busy launderette next door, a small corner shop run by a jolly man called Mr Braithwaite and a greengrocer's.

3 Today, however, the street has changed beyond recognition. Most of the old buildings have been torn down and replaced by newer, more spacious constructions, each one fitted with security cameras. Unlike before, there are no children playing in the streets — a sign that the crime rate is higher and that people are more cautious. In addition, there are now shops on the ground floor of nearly every block, which makes the street seem like one in the town centre.

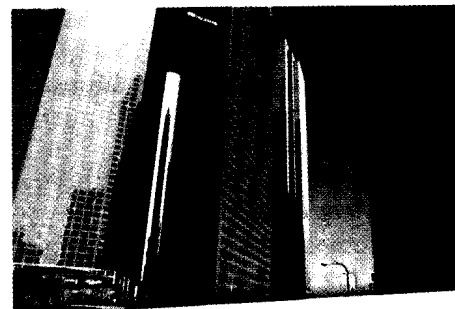
4 What I liked most about Rose Street before the changes was that there seemed to be much more community spirit. A friendly chat or a piece of advice was never far away, and I am sure people felt closer then than they do now. The sense of belonging and the fact that everyone knew each other helped ensure that daily life was relatively peaceful and secure.

5 Nowadays, because people are more and more isolated, the heart of the community appears to have gone. It must be said, however, that the living conditions and the general appearance of the area have improved greatly. Not only is the architecture much more pleasing to the eye, but the streets and public areas are considerably better maintained than they used to be.

6 Still, I have mixed feelings about these changes. I believe that Rose Street was a better place to live ten years ago, since a sense of security and community is much more important than appearance or convenience. I would love to see Rose Street again as it used to be.

29 Look at the notes below, then, use words/phrases from the tables on p. 1 to compare and contrast the two towns.

e.g. Town A is full of modern buildings whereas Town B is a mixture of old and new buildings.



Applebury

full of modern buildings
plenty of green space
large population
limited educational facilities
wide range of shops
many wealthy people
many things to see and do



Bunston

mixture of old and new buildings
plenty of green space
small population
good educational facilities
wide range of shops
a few wealthy people
many things to see and do

- 30** Read the model and correct the highlighted words. Write **S** for spelling, **WO** for word order, **G** for grammar, or **WW** for wrong word then give the paragraph plan. What tenses have been used? Why?



Describe an area of the town you live in which you believe will change in the near future and explain in what ways it will become different

Allenby, one of the most run-down areas of town, is located to the south of the town centre, close to the canal. It used to be occupied by the cotton industry, but the mills were closed down many years **before** and most of Allenby has lain derelict since then. ago **G**

The general impression of the place is one of neglect and emptiness: broken glass, a **little** stray cats, rubbish blown by the wind. Most of the stone buildings have turned almost black over the years, giving them a sombre, and in some cases, quite **forbiding** appearance. This is especially the case at night when the streets are **unlighted** and deserted.

The structures that most catch the eye are the big old mills and warehouses. These towering shapes are punctuated regularly with row upon row of **high** windows. Being **such** huge, they would have dwarfed the hundreds who once worked inside, but now they are empty and not even the old machinery **remain**. The nearby houses, in contrast, are tiny dilapidated terraces, all **the same more or less**.

Recently, however, the town council has released plans to clean up Allenby, following the successful development of similar areas in cities such as London and Liverpool. The mills and warehouses **will transformed** into airy open-plan apartments and galleries, while bar and restaurant owners will be encouraged to invest in the terraced houses along the canal. This transformation will undoubtedly draw an up-market crowd, as **more and much** people seem to be showing an interest in the **areas** distinctive architectural and industrial past.

In the addition to this, the council has also promised to revamp the canal and **it's** tow-path in an attempt to help Allenby shed its reputation for being a magnet for dangerous and shady characters. As a result, the area is bound to attract business and Allenby will be able to develop a cleaner, safer and **all together** more appealing image.

If the example of London's riverfront properties are anything to go by, the redevelopment of Allenby will certainly revitalise the area and ultimately enhance the image of the town as a whole.

DISCUSS & WRITE

- 31** Look at the following composition task instructions and answer the questions below.

a) Describe a well-known landmark in your country and explain why it is famous.


- 1 What are the key words?
- 2 Which landmark in your country would you choose to describe?
- 3 What particular features of this landmark would you choose to describe?
- 4 What reasons can you think of that make the landmark famous?
- 5 What would a suitable paragraph plan for this task be?

b) Describe two areas of the town or city you live in which are very different from each other, and explain why they are so different.

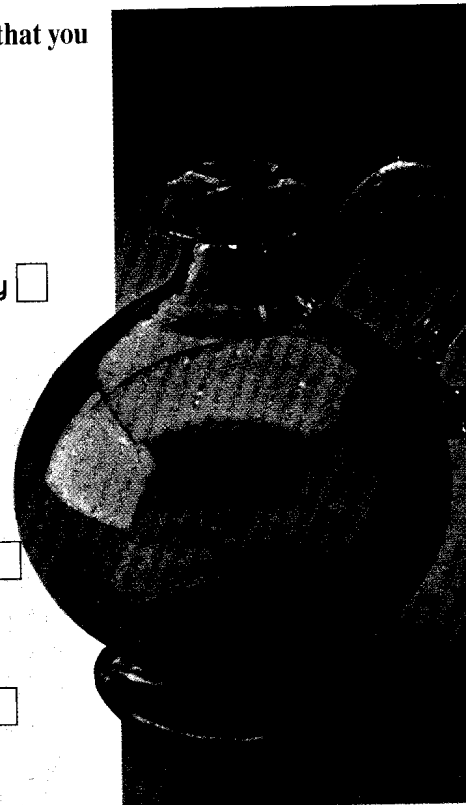
- 1 What are the key words?
- 2 Which two areas of your town would you choose to describe?
- 3 What elements would you include in order to show how these two areas differ?
- 4 What words would you use to compare/contrast these two areas?
- 5 What would a suitable paragraph plan for this task be?

- 32** Choose **ONE** of the composition tasks above, and write a complete paragraph plan with notes. Then write the composition in 300 to 400 words.

UNIT 3 Describing Objects

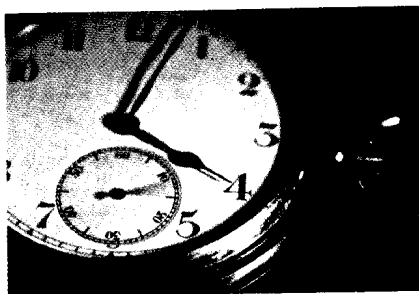
1  Read the table below then listen to the cassette and tick the information that you hear. Then, using the information, describe the object.

Size	quite small <input type="checkbox"/>	huge <input type="checkbox"/>	average <input type="checkbox"/>
Weight	light <input type="checkbox"/>	heavy <input type="checkbox"/>	
Age	late 8th century <input type="checkbox"/>	late '80's <input type="checkbox"/>	late 18th century <input type="checkbox"/>
Shape	round <input type="checkbox"/>	rectangular <input type="checkbox"/>	square <input type="checkbox"/>
Pattern	plain <input type="checkbox"/>	carved <input type="checkbox"/>	striped <input type="checkbox"/>
Colour	blue <input type="checkbox"/>	aqua-green <input type="checkbox"/>	green <input type="checkbox"/>
Origin	Viennese <input type="checkbox"/>	Venetian <input type="checkbox"/>	Venezuelan <input type="checkbox"/>
Material	glass <input type="checkbox"/>	porcelain <input type="checkbox"/>	crystal <input type="checkbox"/>
Special characteristics	two handles <input type="checkbox"/>	one handle <input type="checkbox"/>	small base <input type="checkbox"/>
Reason for being special	expensive <input type="checkbox"/>	family heirloom <input type="checkbox"/>	



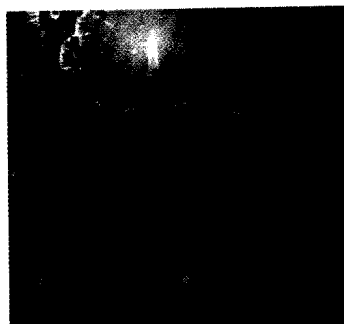
- When you describe objects you should give accurate information concerning the **size** and **weight** (e.g. *big, small, heavy, light, etc*) **shape** (e.g. *triangular, oval, square, etc*), **pattern and decoration** (e.g. *tartan, striped, etc*), **colour** (e.g. *red, green, etc*) **origin** (e.g. *Chinese, Hungarian, etc*) and **material** (e.g. *woollen, silk, wooden, etc*). You should not use all of these adjectives one after the other because this will make your description sound unnatural. You can give necessary information in separate sentences. **e.g. It is a large brown suitcase. Its hard leather is worn and scratched.**
- Descriptions of objects can be found in catalogues, advertisements, leaflets or as part of letters, reports, articles or stories.

2 Read the following descriptions and underline the correct word. Where could each description have been taken from?



a The pocket watch is made of 1) *brass/chrome* and is attached to a long chain. It has an 2) *ebony/ivory* face with 3) *roman/arabic* numerals and a separate dial for the 4) *second/hour* hand. There is a small inscription on the back which reads "J.G.W. 1927".

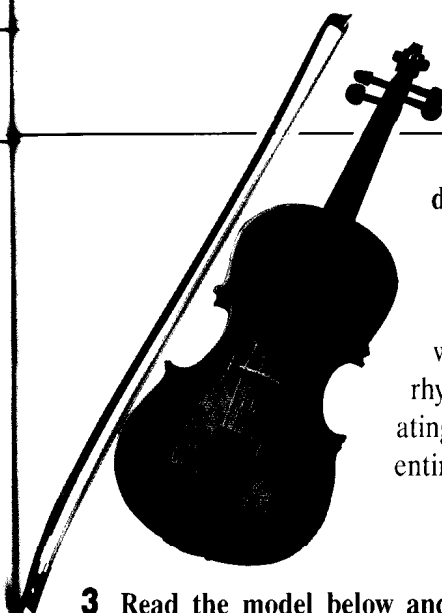
b She stared across the cold dark room at the solitary candlestick on the table. A weak, 1) *flickering/flash-*
ing flame rose from the tall 2) *dark/pale* stem which



appeared to have been 1) *lion*
ioned from 3) *mud*
Intrigued by its 4) *obscure*
design, she lifted herself
the bench and walked toward
the candlestick.



c This beautiful
piece is
one of J
Pot
new
lectic
brooches, now available
branches of Woodchester
A spray of 1) *shimmering*
shuddering mother-of-
leaves rest on a 2) *sickly*
cate gold stem. Below
leaves nestles a 3) *single*
ly, 4) *round/cylindrical* p



d The soloist lifted the small 1) *wood/ wooden* violin and settled it carefully under his chin. Then his 2) *slender/skinny* bow began to dance over the 3) *taut/distraught* strings while his left hand moved to a different rhythm at the other end of the instrument creating a 4) *raspy/sweet* sound which filled the entire concert hall.

- 3 Read the model below and underline the words which are used to describe the family album, then give the paragraph plan.

Describe a family album and explain its importance to you.

Last year, having embarked on an attempt at an attic clear-out, I came across an old family album. It was buried under a pile of junk and had probably been there for at least ten years. I dug it out from under all the odds and ends that had accumulated and took it downstairs to have a closer look.

On wiping it over with a cloth, I found that the album was beautifully bound in leather and even had the family crest embossed on the cover in gold leaf. Its corners had become slightly tatty, but on the whole it was in surprisingly good condition. As I opened the cover, the leather creaked under the strain and I breathed in the faint scent of lavender.

The first page of faded old sepia prints was dated 1900, and the stiff figures wore blank expressions as they stared into the lens. I browsed through the pages of unfamiliar names and faces until I found my grandparents' wedding photos. There was my grandfather, immaculately dressed in his tailored suit, and my grandmother, who looked stunning in a flowing white wedding gown. As I turned the pages, I saw my grandfather going off to the War, smiling bravely in his smart uniform. My own father's infancy and youth followed, his childhood expression showing the playful twinkle in his eye which he still has to this day.

Since discovering the album I have felt closer to my family, having witnessed, through the photographs, occasions in their lives which I would never have known about otherwise. I gained a real feeling of how one generation adds to the next, and could see that all of the qualities of past generations survive in each and every member of the family.

Leafing through this album also gave me a strong sense of the realities of history. The clothes, houses and vehicles depicted in the photos all looked so strange and old-fashioned that it was easy to assume that the people were very different as well. But having actually known some of these people, I knew that they were much the same as I am and that, while external things may change, humans remain fundamentally the same throughout history.

I would like to think that maybe one day, one of my descendants will cherish the album's value. Then they, too, will be able to recapture those long-forgotten moments preserved in these pictures, which are indeed worth more than a thousand words.



DISCUSS & WRITE

- 4 Using the text in Ex. 3 as a model, describe your favourite childhood toy and explain why you liked it so much. Before you start writing, decide on the paragraph plan you will follow and the tenses you will use. Write your essay in 300 - 350 words.

UNIT 4 Describing festivals/events/ceremonies

1 Read the following table, then listen to the cassette and tick the information mentioned. Finally, using the information from the table describe the festival.

Name of festival	Ch'u Yan Festival <input type="checkbox"/>	the Dragon Boat Festival <input type="checkbox"/>
Time	5th day of the 5th month in Chinese lunar calendar <input type="checkbox"/>	5th day of the 5th month in Chinese solar calendar <input type="checkbox"/>
Reason	to protect the river from dragons and spirits <input type="checkbox"/>	to remember the tragic suicide of a politician <input type="checkbox"/>
Preparations	repaint boats <input type="checkbox"/> train for boat races <input type="checkbox"/>	build boats <input type="checkbox"/> design route of boat race <input type="checkbox"/>
Actual day	throw rice dumplings into river <input type="checkbox"/> eat rice cakes <input type="checkbox"/>	boat races <input type="checkbox"/> search for Ch'u Yan's body <input type="checkbox"/>
Feelings	not very interesting <input type="checkbox"/>	an unforgettable experience <input type="checkbox"/>



- A descriptive composition about an event should consist of:
 - a) an **introduction** in which you mention the name/type, time/date, place and reason for celebrating the event;
 - b) a **main body** in which you describe the preparations for the event and the event itself; and,
 - c) a **conclusion** in which you describe people's feelings or comments on the event. Such pieces of writing can be found in magazines, newspapers or travel brochures, or as part of a letter, story, etc.

Points to Consider

- When you describe annual events (e.g. a celebration / festival which takes place every year), present tenses are used and the style is formal. However, when giving a personal account of an event which you witnessed or took part in, past tenses are used and the style may be less formal. The passive is frequently used to describe preparations / activities which take place. **e.g. Pumpkins are carved and placed in windows and costumes are designed.**
- To make the description more vivid and interesting, narrative techniques and a variety of descriptive vocabulary can be used to set the scene and describe the atmosphere. **e.g. Bright lights sparkled over the water as the fireworks spread like huge, colourful flowers and the onlookers who crowded the harbour gasped in wonder and admiration.**

Interpreting the topic

- The number of paragraphs depends on whether the composition task asks for only a description of events or also asks you to explain its significance or how important it is. Compare the topics below. **"Describe a typical wedding in your country"** This topic asks only for a description of an event. The style is impersonal. Present tenses should normally be used. **"Describe a wedding you attended and explain why it made an impression on you."** This topic asks for a description of an event in narrative form, together with reasons why you enjoyed the event. The style is rather informal. Past tenses should be used.

Introduction

Paragraph 1

set the scene
(name, time/date, place of event, reason(s) for celebrating)

Main Body

Paragraph 2

preparations
(decorations, rehearsals etc.)

Paragraph 3

description of actual event
(costumes, food, atmosphere, activities, etc.)

Paragraph 4

explanation 1 and reason

Paragraph 5

explanation 2 and reason

Conclusion

Final Paragraph

feelings, comments, final thoughts

- 2** Read the models and give the paragraph plan for each. What tenses have been used? Why? Where could you find such pieces of writing?

MODEL A

Describe an annual event that you attended and explain why you enjoyed it.

About four years ago I was invited to a Halloween party at the home of a friend. I was reluctant at first but I decided to go to help out with the arrangements.

On the afternoon of the party, I drove to my friend's house with a huge box of materials which I thought might be useful for the preparations. The children were full of enthusiasm as they worked on their masks and costumes. But the best part of all was making the lanterns. I was amazed at the imagination that the children showed when cutting grotesque faces out of the hollowed-out pumpkins. The mood of anticipation was so intense that, by the time the last costume had been made, I was as excited as the children.

By six o'clock, the party was well under way and the house was full of screaming children, with me running around in a mask trying to scare them. At one point during the evening, prizes were awarded to the children who had made the best costumes. Games were organised, including one where the children had their hands tied behind their backs while they tried to pick apples out of a barrel of water using only their teeth. When the party finally ended, the children left in a noisy group, running ahead of their parents and doing their best to scare any unfortunate passers-by.

Rediscovering what it is like to have fun without feeling embarrassed was a fantastic experience. My initial hesitation disappeared once I had decided to get involved. Helping with the children's games enabled me to enter into the party spirit. I saw it as an opportunity to experience the sheer joy that comes so naturally to children.

Another thing that made it a particularly enjoyable occasion was that it brought back memories of my own childhood experiences. I remembered my own excitement when we were dressing up in scary costumes, and the thrill of going from house to house, bags held open for whatever goodies would be put in when we shouted, "Trick or treat!" I also remembered the time we had been chased by a stingy neighbour after spraying his windows with shaving foam.

Since those days I had nearly forgotten about Halloween, but this party gave me so much pleasure that now it is a regular fixture in my diary. I think everyone should have the chance to feel like a child at least once a year.

MODEL B

Describe an annual event that takes place in your country.

Halloween, which takes place every year on 31st October, is an important event, particularly in America. It originated hundreds of years ago when it was believed that on this night the souls of the dead came back and walked among the living. Today, it is treated light-heartedly and celebrated mainly by children.

A certain amount of preparation is required of those who take part. Costumes and masks, typically of ghosts or witches, have to be made. Sweets are bought and parties are organised. Most importantly, a lantern is made. This is done by taking a large pumpkin and cutting out the inside, which is then used to make a pie. Next, holes are cut out of one side in the shape of an evil face, and a candle is placed inside the lantern so that the light glows through the eyes and mouth.

On the day itself, or rather in the evening, children wander around the streets dressed in their costumes. The custom is for children to knock on doors in their neighbourhood and say "Trick or treat". This means that their neighbours have to treat them to sweets or candies, otherwise the "ghosts and witches" will play a trick on them. Usually the adults offer them something, but if they fail to, then a practical joke might be played. This is usually something harmless such as putting shaving foam on the uncooperative neighbour's windows.

If a party has been arranged, then the lights are turned out and the children take part in a variety of activities. This might include anything from telling ghost stories to dancing. Although the parties are based on a rather frightening theme, the emphasis is, of course, on having fun. A typical party game for Halloween is played by putting apples into a barrel of water and inviting the children to pick them up with their teeth. Special drinks are made, which are served with the traditional pumpkin pie.

Many people enjoy Halloween as an excuse to dress up and have fun. It is unique in that its theme is essentially not a pleasant one. However, it remains popular and is eagerly anticipated every year by people of all ages.

3 Read the following topics and underline the key words. Which tenses should you use? What information will you include in each paragraph? How will you adapt the paragraph plan shown on p. 34 to organise your composition?

- 1 Is there a festival in another country that you would like to attend? Describe it explaining why it is important to you.
- 2 Describe a religious ceremony in your country.
- 3 Describe a celebration you attended as a child. Why do you remember this one especially?
- 4 Describe the ceremony of a national event and explain its importance to the people in your country.

4 Rewrite the following paragraphs in the passive. What tenses are used? Why?

A We hold the festival of Shrove Tuesday on the eve of Ash Wednesday, when the 40-day fast before Easter begins. The English have come to know the day as *Pancake Day* since, traditionally, housewives make pancakes to use up the last eggs and milk which they do not eat during Lent. Until the 19th century, villages celebrated Shrove Tuesday by holding carnivals during which they played ball games, ate pancakes and drank mead. Carnivals which people hold in other parts of the world keep the same tradition alive.

The festival of Shrove Tuesday is held on the eve of Ash Wednesday ...

B Everyone awaited the Park Jazz Festival with anticipation. The local newspaper published articles about the arriving musicians, and hotel rooms which the local council had booked were filling up fast. On the first night, people packed the park and the mayor introduced the first act. During the weekend over twenty-four soloists and bands performed modern and traditional jazz and blues. It was a festival which lifted everyone's spirits.

5 Use of sophisticated adjectives or adverbs when describing events makes the description more vivid. Read the short extracts below and replace the words in bold with words from the lists.

A *handsomely, exhilarating, picturesque, gleaming*

The San Fermin is a(n) **1) nice** July festival held in Pamplona, Navarra. On the first day young men, **2) well** dressed in **3) bright** white with scarlet bandanas and sashes, are chased through the **4) nice** medieval streets by fierce bulls.



B *blissful, striking, quaint, romantic, gifted, radiant*

Marie and Victor's wedding reception was held at a **1) good** seaside restaurant. Marie was in her **2) nice** wedding dress and looked **3) good**. After the meal the **4) happy** newly-weds entertained their guests in dancing accompanied by a large group of **5) good** musicians playing **6) nice** waltzes and jazz numbers. Soon everyone was on the dance floor.



C *delicious, gorgeously, heartily, fantastically, rousing, huge, bizarre*

In my home town, the carnival is celebrated in a **1) nice** way. People dress up in **2) strange** costumes and parade **nicely** decorated floats through the streets while bands play **4) nice** music and people dance and sing **5) happily**. It all ends with a **6) big** bonfire followed by an outdoor feast with **7) delicious** food.

- 6 Read the model below and correct the highlighted words. Write **S** for spelling, **WO** for word order, **G** for grammar, **P** for punctuation or **WW** for wrong word. What is the topic of each paragraph? Underline the topic sentence of each paragraph. What tenses have been used?

Describe an event you have attended and explain why it was important to you.

excellent S

Our community decided that a sponsored bike ride would be an excellent way of raising money to send a 12-year-old local boy to America for major surgery. So, last July in a beautiful sunny day, hundreds of people gathered in Witherington town centre to **take place** in and support the event.

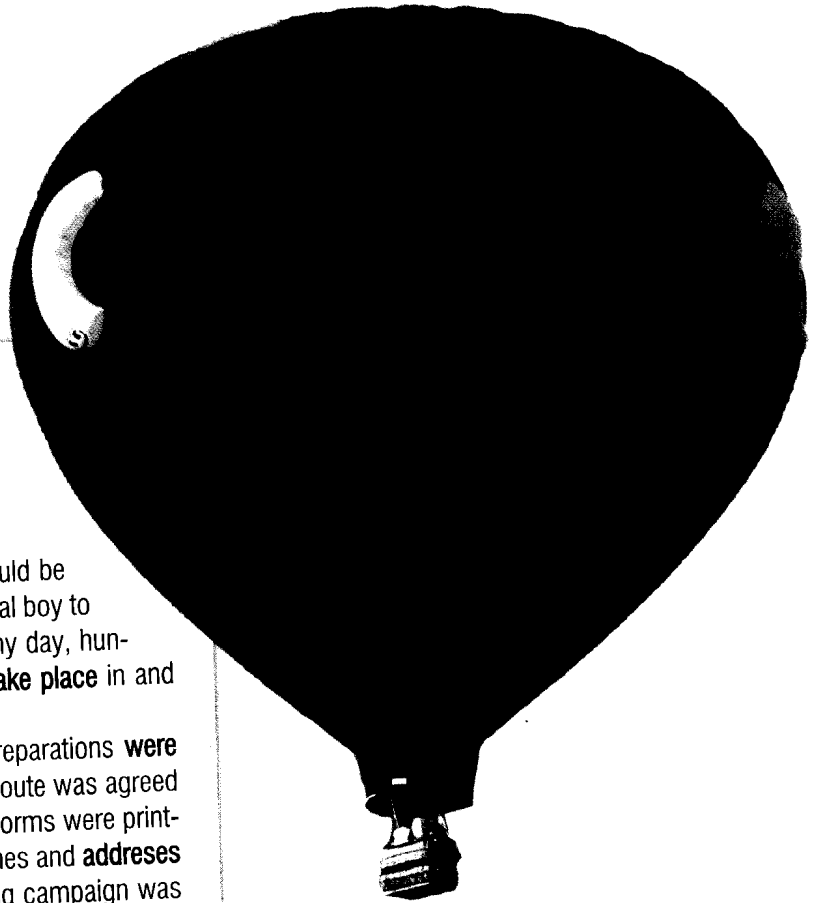
In the weeks leading up to the special day various preparations **were been made**. Meetings were held to plan the day itself, the route was agreed upon and officials were chosen to line the route. Sponsor forms were printed and distributed to participants so they could collect names and **addresses** of people wishing to sponsor them, and a huge advertising campaign was launched in and around the town centre to **rise** awareness of the event.

The day it was a huge success. **Early everyone woke** and gathered at the starting point outside the Town Hall. A huge hot-air balloon was launched and it hovered over the crowds and cyclists throughout the event. Moments before the starting pistol was fired, I glanced round to find myself **surrounded with** cyclists and bikes of all shapes and sizes. Cycling through the streets, I barely had time to notice my tiredness. **Crowds cheering** lined the route waving flags, banners and balloons. Thankfully, refreshments were handed to us as we rode **passed** various points along the way. Everyone managed to finish, and **were given all** a huge round of applause.

Never before I **had** realised how much can be achieved through cooperation. We not only managed to achieve our aim but also strengthened our sense of community spirit. All those **which** participated in the Witherington sponsored bike ride were left with a feeling that almost anything can be achieved through community effort and now we are planning another event to raise money for a new library.

Participated in this event also gave me a sense of personal satisfaction for having helped, in however small a way, to save another human being's life. This moving experience actually **effected** my future. I am now studying to become a nurse so that I can help those in need of medical care.

The event will be remembered and talked about for a long time to come. We were all delighted to **listen** that young William Stokes received his operation and is now **in the perfect** health. After all, deeds are better than words when people need help.



DISCUSS & WRITE

- 7 Look at the following composition task instructions and answer the questions below, then write the composition in 300-350 words.

Describe a festival you have attended and explain its popularity.

- 1 What are the **key words** in the task instructions?
- 2 What kind of festival can be described?
- 3 What tenses are required? Why?
- 4 What reasons can you think of in answer to the "explain" part? Give examples or justification for each reason.
- 5 What would a suitable paragraph plan for this composition task be?